

PRIEST

BY

CORY GOODMAN

"I pass the vale. I breast the steep.
I bear the cross: the cross bears me."

-- John Charles Earle
Oxford Book Of Mystical Verse

FADE IN:

THE MOON. So fat and full in the night sky you can reach out and touch it.

HICKS (V.O.)

This is what's known: There has always been man...and there have always been vampires.

BLACK SHAPES swoop past the moonscape, vicious looking things. Much shrieking and wailing.

Atop a STONE ZIGGURAT -- We see a GROUP OF MEN -- AZTEC WARRIORS readying themselves with PRIMITIVE WEAPONS -- SLINGS, BOWS, SPEARS. Tonight they know they will die.

HICKS (CONT'D)

Since the beginning -- the two have been locked forever in combat...The vampires were quicker, stronger and had the gift of flight.

Quick glimpses of a bloody, brutal battle. Men screaming. Talons ripping. FIERY ARROWS launched against an unseen enemy.

WHOOSH!

With a HOWL, we see A MAN plucked off the ground, his body disappearing in the night. THE IMAGE DISSOLVES as -- the sky turns bright, the moon becoming a familiar ball of yellow gas.

HICKS (CONT'D)

But man had the sun.

THE CAMERA TILTS DOWN to find another GROUP OF MEN -- more sophisticated than the first. Makeshift weapons made of metal and steel slung across their backs glinting in the sunlight.

They stand before AN EARTHEN STRUCTURE, looks like a GIANT WASP NEST. Unsheathing their weapons, they step grimly inside.

We HEAR a HISSING WAIL and the wielding of steel.

HICKS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And so it went like this over many years. As man and vampire both evolved -- the wars became bloodier.

From afar, we see GIANT STACKS OF CORPSES as hydraulic machines stack the black bodies into pyres as big as buildings, smoke rising to the sky in twisting columns.

A LONE MAN

Stands at the base of one of the mammoth pyres. Even from this angle we sense his quiet dignity.

HICKS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Then came THE PRIESTS --

The Man turns and we see his face is shadowed by a large CROSS TATTOO, cutting across his eyes and down the center.

HICKS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-- Specially trained warriors in the art of vampire combat. They single-handedly turned the tide for the humans.

Quick glimpses of a GROUP OF PRIESTS battling a FURY OF VAMPIRES (we still do not get a good look at them). Their technique is otherworldy -- combining the brutality of a Maori Warrior with the grace of a Samurai.

The combat is intense. Glorious. An explosion of blood and limbs.

HICKS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Over time the vampire threat faded. The once fierce race now fatally diminished. A shadow of what they once were.

Through heavy smoke, we see a pile of VAMPIRE CORPSES, a ragged collection of fangs and claws.

HICKS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The remaining vampires were put into camps and -- by decree of the High Clergy -- the Priests disbanded. The former warriors to be integrated as members of regular society.

We see a WAX SEAL pressed onto an ancient parchment. The document carefully rolled and stored in an ORNATE CHAMBER.

HICKS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The human race thrived in relative quiet. The vampire menace quickly forgotten for other, more modern threats.
(beat)
And the few surviving Priests faded into quiet obscurity.

The chamber is closed. We see an encrusted key turning in a heavy set lock and we --

FADE TO BLACK.

Our story begins with the rusty SCRAPE of a windmill...

FADE IN:

EXT. THE WASTELAND - DAY

Dust swirls in nasty tangles.

A LONE MALE FIGURE moves across the plain, long and lean in overalls. AARON PACE. Shadows flicker across his sunburned face, the windmill looming above him.

In his hands is an ELECTRONIC DEVICE, he plunges it into the earth. It makes a series of CLICKING SOUNDS, reading the soil.

Aaron looks up to see the silhouette of a WOMAN standing in the doorway of his CABIN.

He smiles, waving to her. His wife.

INT. OUTPOST 10 (NURSERY) - DUSK

A pioneer's wood cabin.

Aaron sits surrounded, a lattice work of vines covering the walls and floors in beautiful patterns. Not a trace of soil anywhere in the room, everything hydroponically grown.

SHANNON (O.S.)
Supper's on!

He smiles, studying a stunning RUBY RED FLOWER, separate from the others. His crown jewel. He closes the door and enters --

THE KITCHEN

SHANNON PACE carries a bowl filled with a steaming green broth, placing it on the dinner table, moving aside a tiny FIGURINE OF JESUS. The surrounding furniture cluttered with religious knickknacks.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
You been spending an awful lot of time
behind that door. Makes a woman
suspicious.

AARON
Special project. It's taking a little
more time than I thought.

SHANNON
Nothing special about Milkweed. Unless
you like a thorn in the finger.

AARON
It's not Milkweed. Not this year.

SHANNON
What is it?

AARON
You'll see.

His eyes skate to her face moving in for the kiss -- but he's interrupted by

LUCY (O.S.)
Yuck. Pershing stew again.

Their DAUGHTER (13). Already a heartbreaker. This girl is too young, too pretty to be out here in the badlands.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I can't do it anymore. This outpost.
Being all cooped up like this. I'm going crazy!

AARON
Honey...we know this hasn't been easy for you -- In two years someone else'll study the soil and this'll be their outpost.
But for right now -- this is my job.

LUCY
I don't know what it's like to have a best friend. To have any friends. I want to have a crush. I want secrets.
(simply)
I want a life.

Shannon looks at her husband. She knew this day would come.

SHANNON
Aaron. She's thirteen -- She should be with children her own age.

Aaron lets out a breath.

AARON
Okay. Next year, we'll figure out a way to get you to a school close by. In town.

LUCY
But --

AARON

Next year -- that's still plenty of time
for you to have a "crush".

Lucy deflates, knowing this is as good as it's going to get
for awhile. Aaron takes her hand.

AARON (CONT'D)

Tomorrow I'm heading in town to file.
You come with, help your old man out, get
a change of scenery. OK?

(beat)

Now c'mon, stew's getting cold. Bow your
heads and say grace.

The family clasps hands. Whatever their differences, there's
a bond here.

LUCY

Dear Lord we thank you for what we are
about to receive. Blessing us with your
gifts...

She speaks with her eyes clenched shut, words spoken
sincerely, nothing perfunctory about it. She's a believer.

LUCY (CONT'D)

We thank you for the earth and the sky and
for your bounty through Christ our Lord --

She stops, opening her eyes -- staring at the plates and
glasses on the table.

They're RATTLING.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Daddy?

AARON

Shh.

He cocks his ear, hearing a low rumble.

Although he's never heard the sound before...he knows it can
only mean one thing.

Trying to remain calm, Aaron goes to the window.

OUT THE WINDOW

Framed by a BLOOD MOON hanging over the horizon, a DOZEN BLACK
MOTORCYCLES race across the plain, ENGINES thundering.

The Jesus figurine falls off the table, SHATTERING to the floor.

Aaron looks at Shannon, an expression on his face she hasn't seen before --

AARON (CONT'D)
Get the boards!

LUCY
(alarmed)
What's going on?

Aaron doesn't answer, Shannon helping him position pre-cut planks across every window and door. Each with an iron-cross strut for support.

EXT. OUTPOST 10 - SAME

The CYCLES circle the house, kicking up dust in sheets.

INT. OUTPOST 10 - SAME

The ROAR of the engines fills the house as Aaron pulls a POWERFUL LOOKING GUN from the drawer. He drops it, obviously not familiar with firearms.

AARON
Get by me.

Shannon and Lucy crouch at his feet.

EXT. OUTPOST 10 - SAME

The cycles cut their engines, headlights centered on the house. A blistering spotlight.

It's quiet.

The RIDERS step from their machines. We don't get a look at their faces as one by one they LEAP onto the house and windmill, SKITTERING across the walls and roof like spiders.

The blades of the windmill slowly come to a stop.

INT. OUTPOST 10 - SAME

The power goes out, everything going black.

LUCY
(terrified)
Daddy?

We hear the Riders crawling over the outside of the house. Snarling, howling, making terrifying sounds.

Then the worst sound of all: Wood being torn apart.

BLAM! BLAM! Aaron SHOOTS like crazy, the white light MUZZLE FLASHES providing glimpses of SHAPES moving inside the house. BLACK BODIES blown back. Shrieking. Everything happening lightening fast.

Finally, the gun clicks empty and we're plunged back into darkness.

THE LIGHTS COME BACK ON

Aaron is still standing, the house in shambles around him.

He's alone.

AARON
SHANNON!

From outside we hear the cycles revving.

Aaron runs to the door. Rips off the board in time to see --
EXT. OUTPOST 10 - SAME

The motorcycles racing away, a cloud of dust in their wake.

Aaron runs after but TRIPS on --

SHANNON

Her body lying in the dirt, head lurching at an obscene angle. He brushes back her hair --

There's PUNCTURE MARKS in her neck.

Crying, he cradles his wife. Feverishly looking around for

AARON
LUCY!

He keeps screaming but it's no use -- as the motorcycles fade in the night he knows --

They've taken her.

The CAMERA TILTS to the MOON hanging above the plain. It turns BLACK as we now find ourselves peering into --

EXT. CITY FIVE/DISTRICT TWELVE - DUSK

The lip of an ENORMOUS SMOKESTACK. One of hundreds. A seemingly endless brick forest reaching to a sky heavy with soot and ash, while below, miles of FACTORIES stretch and stretch.

A STEAM WHISTLE BLOWS

Quitting time. Hundreds of WORKERS trail listlessly from a massive brick and stone COMPLEX. Grey faces betraying another day's toll.

A TATTOOED FIGURE

moves through the crowd, people stepping out of his way. They do this not out of respect...but fear.

We don't get a good look at him. Just FLASHES --

Shaved head.

Eyes like nail guns.

Tendons clenching over muscle.

As he walks, people whisper. He hears all of it.

He heads into the streets. CITIZENS hurry by, some with surgical masks over their mouths. There's a pale, sickliness to them. Malignant.

The Figure suddenly stops. He cocks his bald head -- Something's caught his attention...

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

We move through trash and shadow finding --

A gang of FACTORY WORKERS, uniformed, surrounding a GIRL (12). Their LEADER holds her close, BUTCHER KNIFE at her throat. Mouth at her ear.

LEADER

Go ahead...scream.

(smiles)

Scream for daddy.

He hears a noise, looks up and sees a SILHOUETTE standing at the head of the alley.

LEADER (CONT'D)
Looks like daddy's already here.
(points the knife)
Well, then. Come on daddy...make it
better.

The Figure steps into a pool of white light, giving us our
first good look at him --

A LARGE BLACK CROSS TATTOO shadows most of his face. Across
the eyes and down the center.

The Mark Of The Priest.

LEADER (CONT'D)
(laughs)
A Priest! Well, lookie here. We got us
a real life war-hero boys! Heard you
guys were real baddasses.

The Workers all pull out large knives.

LEADER (CONT'D)
Guess we'll find out.

They move in on Priest, chemicals burning in their blood,
mouths leering.

Priest folds his hands into the prayer position.

The Workers look at each other. Laugh.

WORKER #1
What's he gonna do...BLESS us to death?

VOOM! -- There's a whirling SNARL of sound -- the sonic
equivalent of a back flip and --

Priest is holding their knives.

Before they can react, he throws the knives into their feet.
They HOWL, pinned to the concrete.

Scared, the leader clutches the girl, pressing against the
brick wall as Priest moves towards him.

LEADER
This ain't the war no more. You got no
right meddlin'.
(beat)
You don't belong here -- You ain't one of
us.

And with that he RAISES the blade to the girl's throat --

WHOOSH! A sudden RUSH OF AIR. The leader looks at the girl's neck, his blade's gone.

So is his hand.

Priest holds the severed limb, its fingers still clutching the blade. The Leader collapses, a Holy Shit! expression frozen on his face.

THE GIRL

Gawks at Priest, possibly more frightened of him than the workers.

He turns to her, wanting to comfort her but not knowing how -- She flinches and runs away, disappearing into the street.

A BEAT as Priest pries the butcher blade from the hand, wiping it off. Tucks it in his waistband.

He moves on.

EXT. CHURCH (ESTABLISHING) - NIGHT

Gone to seed. The once proud house of God now a sad collection of moldering stone and cracked stained glass.

INT. CHURCH

PUSH past row after row of empty pews.

We stop on the CONFESSORIAL BOOTH -- a foot sticking out from the door --

INSIDE THE BOOTH

FATHER KOEPPEN, body skinny and ravaged. The old man pours himself a drink and downs it. Coughing.

The confessional door opens, someone steps inside the other booth. We can't see who it is.

FIGURE
Bless me Father for I have
sinned...again.

The voice is like gravel from the bottom of a deep well. Quietly commanding. Koeppen knows it well.

KOEPPEN

I caught the ambulance picking up what
was left of the factory boys...figured it
was your handywork.

The Shape leans forward, we see it is Priest.

PRIEST

This time there was a little girl.

KOEPPEN

If this keeps occurring it'll be
impossible to keep it from the Clergy.
You'll get us both excommunicated.

Priest gazes into the vestibule, his voice almost a whisper.

PRIEST

I want to see the other Priests.

KOEPPEN

You know you can't. The Clergy forbids it.

PRIEST

Why?

KOEPPEN

They have their reasons.

Priest flicks his eyes over Koeppen as if he could see
through the vestibule, but his expression doesn't change.

PRIEST

And their reasons for building more and
more factories? The sky is turning black.

KOEPPEN

Since when is industriousness a sin? Did
Jesus not teach us to be productive?

(beat)

As your appointed counselor take my
advice...Relax -- Take up a hobby, pick a
vice. Make friends.

PRIEST

You're my friend.

KOEPPEN

I'm a wicked old man who'd sell his
parish for a pint of whiskey.

Priest seems to deflate, his hard shell cracking.

PRIEST
I don't know what's happening to me.
Questions. Doubts. I'm not sure what it
is.

Koeppen slides the vestibule open so they are now face to face.

KOEPPEPEN
The devil comes in many shapes.
Do yourself a favor, keep your head
down. Be smart. And most of all
remember your oath...

He hands Priest a set of ROSARY BEADS.

KOEPPEPEN (CONT'D)
"To go against the Church is to go
against God".

This statement has always been the boilerplate of Priest's
existence -- but tonight, it just sounds like empty dogma. He
squeezes his eyes shut, clutching the rosary as we CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY OF TENAMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Garbage litters the floor. The sound of water dripping.

Priest stands, waiting for the lift to arrive.

A BOY AND HIS MOTHER wait too. The boy stares at Priest,
fascinated, his mother doing her best to pretend not to
notice him.

The elevator arrives and they step inside.

INT. LIFT - MOMENTS LATER

As it rises, a single bulb flickers above. Buzzing.

The boy continues to stare at Priest, bewitched by the tattoo.

BOY
(to Priest)
Did it hurt?

The lift grinds to a stop. The mother quickly pulls her son
out as the door rolls open, glaring at Priest, disappearing
down a dark corridor.

And only now does Priest answer.

PRIEST
(softly)
Yes.

The lift door clatters shut.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIEST'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sparse, containing only what's needed.

Priest peels off his shirt revealing a constellation of old battle scars -- Punctures. Scratches. Bite marks. His skin showing the early signs of aging.

He goes to the lone decoration in his apartment --

A FADED PHOTO OF THE PACE FAMILY

He takes the picture off the wall, studying it. The image bringing him peace.

From the streets below, the sound of a GUNSHOT.

He looks at the rosary beads, still in his hand.

He turns out the light.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - 3 AM

Unable to sleep, Priest sits on the edge of his bed. Praying.

There's a knock at the door.

PRIEST
Who is it?

MESSENGER (O.S.)
Messenger.

Priest opens the door. A MESSENGER holds up a PUNCH CARD.

MESSENGER (CONT'D)
I got a Priority Punch. Originated in the wasteland.

Priest takes the card, the man writing up a receipt.

INT. PRIEST'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Priest goes to a WOODEN BOX, feeding the punch card into it.

A Rube Goldberg-like device of PULLEYS and WINCHES squeaks to life, like a sail, a SCREEN rises and Aaron appears, his image a smudge. He looks awful. A man at the end of himself.

AARON

(filtered)

L-Lucy's gone. They t-took her. I tried to stop 'em.

I know you're... "retired". But can you find her? Find her before --

(sobs)

They killed Shannon.

The screen goes blank.

Priest shuts his eyes, making the sign of the cross.

His hand curls into a fist.

EXT. CLERGY CITY (ESTABLISHING) - LATER THAT NIGHT

Magnificent.

At the Cities center, a municipal of baroque BASILICAS AND CHURCHES -- all safely walled off from the rest of the metropolis.

INT. CLERGY CHAMBER - NIGHT

Giant shafts of moonlight hit a marbled floor.

Priest and Father Koeppen are led by FOUR OFFICERS before A TRIBUNAL OF MONSIGNORS (all at least in their 70's). They sit behind a giant table cloaked in the florid robes of their religion. Men of scripture, creed and doctrine.

Priest kneels, bowing his head.

PRIEST

Thank you for meeting with me on such short notice, Monsignors.

Even the Monsignors are uneasy around Priest. Their leader, ORELAS, leans forward, addressing him.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS

Father Koeppen notified us of the situation. Our prayers are with your family.

PRIEST

I come before you because I would like my authority to be reinstated.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS

On what grounds?

Priest is taken aback.

PRIEST

She's my blood, Monsignor.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS

The proper authorities are handling the situation. I'm sure they'll do a fine job.

PRIEST

The proper authorities?

MONSIGNOR ORELAS

All occurrences of vampire disobedience and felonies are strictly a Federal matter now.

(beat)

You Priests did too good a job. The vampire population is classified as endangered. They're protected.

PRIEST

But Monsignor...they are the enemy.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS

Were the enemy. The war ended a long time ago.

PRIEST

Not so long that we should forget what they are capable of.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS

You would do well to remember the words of our Savior: Turn the other cheek. Embrace your enemies.

(beat)

It is not our place to interfere -- or yours.

Priest looks up, obviously in great turmoil.

PRIEST

I can be of great service to the investigation. I can find her.

The tribunal shifts uncomfortably, intimidated by Priest. Orelas stands.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS
You forget yourself, Priest...
It has been brought to our attention that
you have engaged in a number of
transgressions. Tell me...do you feel
yourself to be above God?

PRIEST
No, Monsignor.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS
Engaging in any kind of practice is
sacrilege -- You bring shame upon our
house.

Priest turns the full force of his gaze on him.

PRIEST
"Let your light shine before men, that
they may see your good works and glorify
your Father which is in Heaven" --
Matthew 5:16

The Monsignor POUNDS the table.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS
You dare quote scripture to me!
Questioning the authority of the Clergy
is forbidden! If you engage in another
transgression you will be stripped from
the Order and excommunicated immediately.
Do I make myself clear?

PRIEST
Yes, sir.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS
I said do I make myself clear, Father.

PRIEST
Yes, Monsignor.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS
You're a soldier. God's soldier -- Act
like one.
(beat)
Remember your vow: "To go against the
Church is to go against God".

The officers start to lead Priest and Koeppen out the chamber.

MONSIGNOR ORELAS (CONT'D)

-- Father Koeppen, please stay behind
for a moment...we have something we need
to discuss.

Off Koeppen's expression we CUT TO:

EXT. SOUP KITCHEN - ESTABLISHING

HOMELESS stand single file, wrapped around the corner, black
flakes of ash drifting down as they await tonight's supper.

INT. SOUP KITCHEN - NIGHT

Priest sits alone, rosary beads clutched in his hands. He
looks up to find Koeppen, the old man staggering as he down
an EXPENSIVE BOTTLE OF WHISKEY, three sheets to the wind.

KOEPPEPEN

I knew I'd find you here.

He sits, pouring himself another drink, toasting the poor
souls at the surrounding tables.

KOEPPEPEN (CONT'D)

How many nights in this very spot? You
with your endless questions on the nature
of suffering...Me with none of the
answers.

Priest doesn't even acknowledge him, lost in his thoughts.

KOEPPEPEN (CONT'D)

Well, now I'm the one with a question.
This one's a riddle.

(beat)

What is greater than God but more evil
than the Devil? The poor have it, the
rich need it -- and if you eat
it...you'll die.

Priest looks up, his eyes cold.

PRIEST

Why won't they listen to me?

A beat. Koeppen takes another drink.

KOEPPEPEN

Okay. I'm going to give you one more
riddle and if you listen close - you might
just hear an answer to your question.

(clears his throat)

(MORE)

KOEPPEN (CONT'D)

How can a man who spent his whole life
searching for devils miss the ones
staring him in the face?

From behind, a CLICKING sound.

Priest turns to find an OFFICER standing, LASER-GUIDED SHOTGUN pointed at him. The soup kitchen suddenly deathly quiet.

KOEPPEN (CONT'D)

The Church feels it's better to keep you
under its care...at least until this
trouble with your niece blows over.

PRIEST

You know I can't do that.

KOEPPEN

That's what I figured.

TEN TROOPERS IN FULL RIOT GEAR STORM IN

Jackboots CLACKING, they form a circle around Priest and Koeppen. Guns SNAP into place, laser points dotting his body.

Priest looks at Koeppen -- betrayed.

PRIEST

Why?

KOEPPEN

(toasting ruefully)

"To go against the Church is to go
against God".

Priest looks around the room -- FAMILIES AND HOMELESS huddle at the surrounding tables, terrified.

There's only one thing left for him to do.

PRIEST

Then...I go against God.

In an eyeblink --

Priest strips the gun from the nearby officer, CRACKING it against the trooper's head, his attack graceful and precise -- a whirlwind of PINPOINTED BLOWS and SHATTERED BONES.

When it's over, eleven troopers lie on the ground writhing.

Everything goes quiet.

ANGLE ON: A LITTLE BOY

He breaks from his father's knee, slowly moving towards the window, drawn by a FLICKERING SHADOW.

His mouth drops open as --

WHAM! -- TWENTY MORE TROOPERS

PUNCH through the windows in unison, showering everybody with glass! BULLETS whistle through the air, everyone SCREAMING as they scramble for cover. The father diving for his son.

PRIEST

Folds his hands into the prayer position.

VOOM! There's a POP OF AIR and --

Silence.

The troopers look around confused -- their guns have disappeared.

ON A NEARBY TABLE

A neat pile of shotguns sit, every FIRED BULLET collected harmlessly in a clean circle around them...as if picked out of thin air.

THE LITTLE BOY

is somehow back with his father, the two safely holding hands, staring stupidly at each other.

Priest is gone.

KOEPPEN

Looks at his fancy whiskey bottle, inside now floats Priest's ROSARY BEADS. He fishes them from the bottle, hand shaking.

KOEPPEN
Heaven help us.

He takes a swig.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The STRIKE of a match -- a prayer candle is lit, glowing in the darkness.

AT THE ALTAR

Priest kneels, eyes clenched shut in prayer. A large figurine of Jesus on the cross looms over him. The Christ is expressive -- He suffers.

PRIEST

Oh my God...I am sorry for having offended you. It was never my intention to do so...

His words continue OVER --

EXT. STORAGE UNIT - NIGHT

Priest standing in front of a STEEL DOOR. Hasn't been opened for some time.

PRIEST (O.S.)

I want so much to firmly resolve with the help of your grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

INT. STORAGE UNIT - NIGHT

The DOOR slides open just a crack. A sliver of light landing on a piece of BLACK SCULPTED METAL.

PRIEST (O.S. CONT'D)

But I can't.

EXT. STORAGE UNIT - NIGHT

An ENGINE ROARS, RUMBLES, idling...a throaty GURGLE...Priest pulls out on a

BLACK MOTORCYCLE

If this thing were a horse it'd be the ultimate stallion -- Pulse engine. Nitrous. The works. A panel of black titanium solar cells covers the bike like armor.

He races onto the street.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sheets of rain fall like lead. Pooling in the gutters.

PRIEST (O.S.)

All I can do is ask for forgiveness for what is yet to come...

The cycle knives through the city. Expertly working his way through congested streets. Moving past tent cities, stockyards and rusty industrial machinery.

EXT. CITY LIMIT - NIGHT

We see a MASSIVE WALL -- A hundred feet high, surrounding the city. Priest pulls up to a CHECKPOINT TOWER. A PHALANX OF GUARDS with big shotguns at the ready, snapping into place. Mugs like anvils.

PRIEST (O.S.)

I now know the devil lives within me.
The sins coming all too easy...

Still on his bike, Priest's foot touches the ground, blocking our view as we CUT TO:

EXT. CITY LIMIT - MOMENTS LATER

THE MASSIVE DOOR/WALL sliding open with a KLANG! revealing the wasteland.

PRIEST (O.S.)

And all too frequently.

Priest REVS his bike, gunning out the doors. UNCONSCIOUS BODIES left in his wake.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTELAND - DAY

Blazing sun. An endless plain of cracked earth. Nothing around anywhere...

VROOM!

Priest's cycle streaks across the salt flats. It's glorious.

EXT. WASTELAND - LATER

Priest rides past a line of ANCIENT STATUES dominating the landscape, each representing one of the seven deadly sins, sentinels marking the boundary into the deep wasteland.

He FLOORS it, the bike PUNCHING for the horizon, a thick plume of dust funneling behind it...

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTPOST 10 - NIGHT

It's quiet, just the sound of the rusty windmill. The only light provided by the moon reflecting off Priest's cycle, he's just arrived.

He crouches, examining a fresh TIRE TREAD. He stares, taking in the landscape, feeling it.

Then he steps inside the cabin --

INT. OUTPOST 10

It looks like a war zone. Splintered furniture everywhere, sprays of dried, black blood over the floorboards.

He brushes away rubble and finds a DRESS, Shannon's. Putting his face to it, he inhales, his expression softening.

BEHIND HIM

Quietly, A COWBOY HAT and a SHOTGUN BARREL emerge from a hole in the floor.

COWBOY HAT

Alright, now -- Not another step.

Climbing out from the hole, both barrels pointed, is SHERIFF HICKS (22). You could say the name fits. But you'd only be half right.

HICKS

Thought you'd come back for a souvenir, huh? You gotta be the dumbest bloodsucker I ever come across.

Priest steps into a pool of moonlight, illuminating his face.

PRIEST

If I was a vampire you'd be dead already.

The cross tattoo, a striking image. Hicks stares, pushing his hat back on his forehead.

HICKS

I'll be damned.

He casually spits some ATOMIC CHAW, hitting the floorboards with a SIZZLE.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALBRIDGE - NIGHT

Hicks and Priest ride in tandem across the plain. Hicks' bike a standard police vehicle, nothing fancy but reliable. They head towards town, passing a WOODEN SIGN --

HALBRIDGE

EXT. HALBRIDGE (MAIN STREET) - NIGHT

At a glance this seems like one of those frontier towns from an old Western.

TOWNSPEOPLE gather around a SNAKE-OIL SALESMAN, the man pitching his wares before a painted van reading DR. TOMLIN'S MEDICINE SHOW. TRANCE MUSIC wafts from the nearby saloon.

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN

Do I ask for three dollars? Do I ask for two dollars? No folks! ONE dollar! One piece of tin and protection is yours!

PRIEST AND HICKS

Pull up in front of the jail. Hicks eyes the salesman, coolly dismounts and adjusts his hat.

HICKS

'Scuse me a minute.

He heads towards the crowd, the salesman continuing his pitch.

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN

Vampires are a deadly lot! YOU could be next! I seen a Blackblood bite a man like a gingersnap! The only sure way to be safe is a bag of DR. TOMLIN'S WONDER POWDER!

(holds up a sack)

If you care about your loved ones then you MUST have this amazing elixir in your homes tonight --

WHOOSH! A KNIFE slices through the air, spears the sack and pins it to a nearby wall with a THUNK.

Hicks steps to the front of the crowd. It's his knife.

HICKS

You best get in that van and clear on out, mister.

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN
For what reasons? I'm a legitimate
business man.

Hicks PULLS his SIX-SHOOTER, cocks it.

HICKS
I got six right here.

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN
Sheriff, I am shocked you can be so
cavalier with the safety of your
townfolk --

BAM! A bullet blows out the van's headlight.

HICKS
That's one.

KAPOW! The windshield cracks like a spiderweb.

HICKS (CONT'D)
Two.

Immediately, the salesman quickly packs up his wares,
scrambling for the van door. As he gets in, he catches a
look at Priest, pauses a moment, then starts up the vehicle
and quickly PEELS away.

Hicks pulls the knife from the wall, holds the bag up to the
crowd.

HICKS (CONT'D)
Now you all listen up. This bag ain't
good for nothin' but linin' that man's
pockets with your hard earned money.

Much shuffling amongst the people -- they trust in their
sheriff but they're frightened. An older man named, CROCKER,
steps up.

CROCKER
You don't know that. You're just a kid.

HICKS
I seen enough two-bit hustlers and carny
barkers. He ain't no better.

CROCKER
But what if he's right?

Hicks tosses the sack to Crocker.

HICKS

Take a look.

(Crocker does, the contents
spilling to the ground)

Ain't nothin' but sand, flour and maybe a
little garlic. Oldest trick in the
wasteland.

(to everyone)

Now I don't blame you for bein' afraid.
But those vampires headed clear on out
and they ain't comin' back.

WOMAN

And what about the girl?

Hicks pauses. This is not easily said.

HICKS

I filed a report with the Cities last
night. I'm sure they're doin' all they
can.

The townspeople mutter amongst themselves. Hicks looks over
to Priest, a GROUP OF CHILDREN have already gathered,
pointing and whispering at him.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A hole in the wall. A few wanted posters and postal warrants
tacked up on a board beside a single jail cell.

Hicks leads Priest inside.

HICKS

I've already had one of the boys send for
your brother. We got him put up at
Paddy's place.

Priest gazes out the window. A group of TOWNSPEOPLE are
milling out front, staring at him. He pulls down the shade.

HICKS (CONT'D)

You're gonna have to excuse the
attention. We don't get strangers 'round
here too much -- 'Specially no Priest.
'Course we ain't never had no vampire
attack in these parts before.

(eyeing Priest)
But then you're just here to perform the
service, right?

Priest doesn't reply, staring at a yellowed wanted poster.

HICKS (CONT'D)

Never much of a believer myself. I figure I got one bullet to shoot. I'm gonna shoot it my way...not how some BOOK tells me to.

(spits)

But I do hear things...it true what they say about you folks?

(beat)

You can fold time?

At that, Priest turns, looking at Hicks. Before he can answer the door opens and --

AARON

comes through, looking older than the last time we saw him. Seeing Priest, his face cracks, smiling for the first time in days.

AARON

You came.

Overcome, he wraps his arms around his brother, embracing him. Priest hugs him back.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

A BLIND GRAVEDIGGER plays an old SQUEEZEBOX, hands expertly working the bellows. He's done this for every funeral in Halbridge for the last fifty years. The sad music drifts across the wasteland.

SHANNON'S COFFIN

Lies in a freshly dug hole. Priest sprinkles dirt across the casket, offering prayers.

Aaron watches silently. A GROUP OF TOWNSPEOPLE encircle the grave. Everyone wearing black goggles for protection from the swirling dust.

HICKS

Stands apart from the others, hat in his hands. His eyes focused on Priest. Not even watching as --

Aaron plants the RUBY RED FLOWER at the head of the grave. Its glorious color almost obscene in this barren wasteland.

CUT TO:

INT. PADDY'S PLACE - DAY

A DOG rests lazily in front of a rotating fan.

PADDY'S a bear of a man, the town bachelor. He plops down two bowls of brown stew before a waiting and hungry Aaron and Priest. The gruel smells foul, tastes fouler.

PADDY

Jackrabbit Stew. Never served no man of the cloth before. Hope you like it spicy, Father!

He stands over both of them, eager for a response. Priest takes a sip, grimaces, tries his best to smile but fails hideously.

PRIEST

...Delicious.

PADDY

(slaps him on the back)
'Course it is! It was me Ma's recipe.

As Paddy jubilantly walks away, Priest puts the bowl on the floor and the dog pads over, eagerly lapping it up. Aaron smiles.

AARON

How come you never came round more? You know you were always welcome.

PRIEST

I know.

AARON

After the war was over we figured you'd stay with us. Shannon was real fond of you. Lucy too. She was always asking about you.

Uncomfortable with the conversation, Priest pulls out a map, unrolling it onto the wooden table. He moves his finger across the paper.

PRIEST

The pack headed in this direction. There's a reservation up that way so that's where I'll start.

AARON

If anyone finds out you're doing this --

PRIEST
You're my brother.

Aaron nods. This is enough.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
I'll find her.

AARON
And you'll bring her back to me.

Something in Priest's face darkens. He doesn't answer, not able to look his brother in the eye.

CUT TO:

INT. GUN SHOP - DAY

A SHOPCLERK mops the floor, guns of all types lining his walls. Everything from old Smith and Wesson's to the latest and most powerful hand cannons.

With a jingle, the door opens revealing Priest. The clerk smiles. All he needs is one look and he knows -- This guy's good for business.

CLERK
Good afternoon, sir! How may I be of service?

PRIEST
I need bullets.

CLERK
How many?

PRIEST
How many do you have?

The clerk laughs...then realizes he's serious.

CLERK
No offense, Father. You got a permit, right?

PRIEST
I have this.

He pulls out a sack of coins, it hits the counter with a solid THUD.

The clerk smiles wider.

INT. PADDY'S PLACE - NIGHT

Hundreds of bullets all orderly lined on a table top.

Priest sits with his back to us, hunched over a candle. We're unable to see what he's doing. Aaron picks up a bullet, twirling it in the light.

AARON

Maybe if I knew how to use these she'd still be alive.

PRIEST

Sometimes things just happen. Fault's got nothing to do with it.

AARON

Funny. I'm the one who used to say that. You were the one who always said everything was God's will.

Priest takes the bullet from him.

PRIEST

I'm not so sure anymore.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Aaron opens it slightly. It's Sheriff Hicks.

HICKS

Aaron.

AARON

Sheriff.

HICKS

You mind if I have a word with your brother?

An awkward BEAT as the two stare at each other. Both knowing what the other's thinking.

PRIEST (O.S.)

It's alright. Let him in.

Eyeing Priest, Aaron lets the Sheriff in, shutting the door behind him as he leaves. The vibe in the room is uncomfortable -- Priest not even acknowledging Hicks.

HICKS

I'm sure you're well aware of the Vampire Protection Act.

(MORE)

HICKS (CONT'D)
It strictly states it is forbidden for
anyone to hunt vampires anymore.

Priest doesn't say anything, he just keeps working.

HICKS (CONT'D)
These days, things go through proper
channels. Paperwork drawn up.
Investigators called in. Procedures
followed.

(spits a wad of tobacco)
'Course we both know after a week, girls
taken by vampires either end up dead or
worse -- turned.

(thinks)
I'm sure you also wouldn't be surprised
to know my office's been contacted. I'm
supposed to arrest you on sight.

He pulls a SHINY OBJECT from his pocket, puts it on the table
beside Priest.

HICKS (CONT'D)
On the other hand -- if I go after Lucy
there'll be a warrant on my head
too...and that'll put us in the same
briar patch.

Priest looks at the object -- It's Hicks' sheriff's badge.
Five points glowing brightly in the candlelight.

HICKS (CONT'D)
We leave at sun up.

Priest turns. A moment as each man studies the other.

PRIEST
Why?
HICKS
We're the only chance she's got.

Priest picks a bullet from the table, a carefully notched
CROSS now in its tip (this is what he's been doing). He
SNAPS it in the air.

PHHHHTT!

Hick's knife FLIES across the room, PINNING the bullet to the
wall. A thin trickle of gun powder leaks from its casing,
spilling to the floor. The kid's fast.

PRIEST
How you with a gun?

HICKS
Better than I am with a knife.

Priest considers this.

PRIEST
I'll be there.

Nothing more needing to be said, Hicks turns to walk out, stops at the door.

HICKS
What's with all the bullets anyway? I thought Priests don't use firearms.

PRIEST
We don't.
(beat)
They're for you.

Hicks nods, realizing Priest was ahead of him the whole time.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight streams through an open window.

Priest places his bible on the nightstand and crouches beside the bed, closing his eyes. Hands clasped.

PRIEST
Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

As he continues THE CAMERA slowly moves OUT THE WINDOW and into the night, moving across HALBRIDGE.

PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

We see the TOWNSPEOPLE lock their doors, bolting the shutters, tucking their children in safely for the night.

PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

And now the camera stops on a LARGE SHADOWY FIGURE perched on a nearby roofline.

The only thing we can see of it is a DUSTER illuminated by the SOFT GLOW OF A LIT CHEROOT...the Figure watches Priest as he finishes his prayer and blows out a candle.

Silently, the Figure takes off. Flying into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTELAND - DAWN

The sky is brightening, the edge of the world turning white.

EXT. CEMETARY - SAME

Sunlight hits Shannon's grave, the CROSS MARKER casting a shadow, the once glorious red flower already withered.

Aaron watches the sunrise, some other time he would've been moved by the sight, maybe even cried. This morning...nothing. Priest is beside him.

AARON

You never talked much about the war --
but I know you saw things. Bad things.

PRIEST

Yes.

AARON

What'd you do...to make yourself unsee
'em? To make it stop playing in your
head?

PRIEST

I prayed.

AARON

Did it help?

Priest doesn't answer, the question hanging overhead, a dark cloud.

AARON (CONT'D)

I never used to be much on faith. You
know that.

(thinks)

But then Lucy was born...and as soon as I
saw her I knew. I just knew -- There's
no way something so perfect came from me.
She was a gift. From God.

(looks at Priest)

You find her. Whatever it takes. Find
Lucy.

Priest nods, his brother's eyes burning into him. Hearing the sound of an engine, both men turn to find Hicks pulling up.

HICKS

Didn't mean to be late -- My deputies are a little green about keepin' the peace all by their lonesome. Needed a pep talk.

(to Priest)

Figure I'll ride point. I know my way 'round the Wasteland better than just 'bout anyone.

Without so much as a word, Priest climbs on his cycle and kick starts it, the engine REVVING to life.

VROOM! off he goes. Hicks can't help but laugh.

HICKS (CONT'D)

(to Aaron)
Real charmer, your brother.

AARON

That's just his way. Don't pay it no mind.

(beat)
You just bring back my baby.

Hicks nods. Then he REVS the throttle, speeding after Priest. Aaron watching until their cycles are just distant specs.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTELAND - DAY

A SERIES OF SHOTS as Priest and Hicks BLAST across the barren wasteland. They make a strange pair, not exactly Butch and Sundance:

A. THUNDERING past strange ROCK FORMATIONS, bizarre shadows cast across the plains.

B. A group of WANDERING MONKS, holy men carrying offerings to the desert, bow as they race by.

C. We see a PHOTO OF LUCY -- now stuck to Hicks' windscreen.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLUFF - LATER

Astride their bikes, Priest and Hicks, look down at a valley. A SERIES OF ADOBES sit clustered in the basin. CRYPTS.

HICKS

The Nightshade Reservation. Ain't nothin' but red-outs and rejects. They're a fallen tribe.

PRIEST

Either way. We have two hours to get in and out.

HICKS

What happens in two hours?

PRIEST

Sundown.

Hicks looks up at the sky. The sun tilting towards the horizon.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHTSHADE RESERVATION - 60 MINUTES 'TIL SUNDOWN

Priest and Hicks enter engines idling, flocks of chickens run riot underneath their tires CLUCKING wildly. Crumbling structures. Squalor.

HICKS

This is how most of the reservations are these days.

We see faces peering out from wooden slats. Gaunt, lifeless eyes. These are FAMILIARS.

PRIEST

Familiars are illegal.

HICKS

Nobody really enforces it. Most come from the fringes. Drifters. They're creepy as all hell -- but harmless.

They turn off their bikes and dismount. Hicks stepping awkwardly between the chickens.

A MALE FAMILIAR stands with a butcher knife over a basin. His gaze is slack -- More dead than alive. He picks up a chicken and CHOP! off goes its head, blood draining into the container.

His voice a hissing rasp.

FAMILIAR

Good afternoon, Sheriff...Father. What brings you to Nightshade?

HICKS

We're looking for a Vamp Pack. They woulda' came through here a couple nights ago.

FAMILIAR

Nobody comes through Nightshade. That's the way we like it. Nice and quiet.

HICKS

Then you won't mind if we have a look around?

The Familiar picks up another chicken. Raises the butcher knife.

FAMILIAR

Not at all.

CHOP! The head clatters to the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHTSHADE RESERVATION - 30 MINUTES TIL' SUNDOWN

Priest and Hicks move through the reservation looking for clues. Priest goes to the nearest structure, TWO EYES peer from a tiny slat. The CRYPT'S FAMILIAR.

PRIEST

We're not going to find anything out here...We have to get into the crypts.

HICKS

Not supposed to do that without a warrant --

BAM! -- Priest kicks the door in.

We hear the Familiar SCREECH as Priest steps inside --

INT. CRYPT - CONTINUOUS

The light of the sun's never been in here. Probably should have stayed this way. Tiny bones cover the entire floor, excrement smearing the walls.

The Crypt Familiar cowers in the corner, shielding his eyes from the light. His body fishbelly white and sickly.

CRYPT FAMILIAR
(hissing)
Go! Go! You must go! Master will be
angry!

Hicks is grimacing from the stench. He looks at Priest, not happy as he approaches a STONE SARCOPHAGUS. Running his hand over it.

PRIEST
Where's the girl?

CRYPT FAMILIAR
PLEEASE please go!

PRIEST
No? Maybe your Master will know.

CRYPT FAMILIAR
NO! NO! THE MASTER CANNOT BE DISTURBED!

Priest rests his hand against the stone slab covering the tomb. It must weigh 200 pounds. He moves the slab. Just a centimeter -- but the Familiar screeches.

PRIEST
Where is she?

CRYPT FAMILIAR
(sobbing)
Please. Please don't hurt my Master.

PRIEST
Your Master'll be dead.

He shoves the slab more, the light rays hanging just outside the edge.

And now The Familiar begins to laugh, a horrible rattling sound. Something in his mood has shifted.

CRYPT FAMILIAR
No, I don't think so...

Hearing a noise, Hicks turns, witnessing a horrible sight moving towards him --

THE NIGHTSHADE FAMILIARS

About ten of them. Real Night Of The Living Dead stuff. Makeshift weapons in their hands: Scythes, Slingblades, Buzzsaws.

Before Hicks can react --

A FAMILIAR

Attacks, BUTCHER BLADE raised. CHOP! the blade buries itself in Hicks' arm!

HICKS

Lets loose with a mean roundhouse. Plugging him in the chest. In one quick motion he rips the butcher blade from his arm, flinging it at the nearest

FAMILIAR

The blade lodges in his skull and he drops like a sack.

These guys move surprisingly fast -- Hicks is already surrounded. He hears a whistling noise as

A BUZZSAW BLADE

knifes through the air heading straight for him. He DUCKS, the blade whistling past, sawtoothing into the torso of another Familiar.

HICKS

Pulls off his COWBOY HAT. Activating a release. With a CLICK! thousands of needle-like teeth extend from the brim.

With deadly accuracy, he flings the hat: It FLASHES through the air, DAISYWHEELING around a Familiar's neck, pinpricking his skin and finally whirling back to Hicks' hand like an obedient pup.

A BEAT as the Familiar stands, mouth agape. Then with a wet SNAP his head rolls off his shoulders, THUDDING in the dirt.

Hicks falls to the ground, his wound starting to get the best of him. He musters up his strength for another hat attack but before he can --

PRIEST

Leaps in front. Blocking his way.

PRIEST

Not yet.

With a HORRIBLE SCREECH the Familiars attack, LAUNCHING at Priest and Hicks. Blades in the air.

Priest CHARGES into the frenzy. A juggernaut. His movements clean and calculated, bones breaking around him with a wet snap, bodies THUDDING at his feet.

When the dust clears, Priest stands alone...and he is holding their weapons.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Now we can do this easy --

He tosses the BUTCHER KNIFE, it sticks in the ground a hairline from a Familiar's head.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Or we can do this HARD --

Priest flings another BLADE. This one PLANTS in the leg of the Familiar. He HOWLS.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Where is she?

THE FAMILIAR
(cackling)
You're too late, Priest --

He points to the horizon, the last rays of daylight disappearing.

CRYPT FAMILIAR
-- It's our time now.

We hear a LOW RUMBLE from inside the crypts. Priest looks at Hicks, a feeling of dark electricity in the air, anticipation.

PRIEST
They get your gun arm?

HICKS
Why?

PRIEST
You're gonna need it.

CUT TO:

INT. CRYPTS - SAME TIME

MULTIPLE SHOTS OF

SLABS on each sarcophagus sliding open. SHAPES roiling in the blackness inside. The sound of dark, mewling things. Things already sensing trouble in their midsts.

EXT. NIGHTSHADE RESERVATION - SAME TIME

CRYPT FAMILIAR
THE MASTERS ARE AWAKING!

BLACK SHAPES

BURST from the crypt doorways SCREECHING as they fly into the air. Circling above the reservation like a nest of angry hornets. Disturbed.

WHOOSH! One of the figures SWOOPS low, touching to the ground. Giving us our first good look at a vampire:

Wet, white skin.

Insect clicking claws.

Black eyes.

Fangs.

More creature than human.

The vampire cackles, sounds like dried paper, its voice a series of teeth clicking hisses as it eyes Priest angrily.

LEAD VAMPIRE
What are you doing here, Priest...haven't you already done enough?

PRIEST
We don't want a fight. We're just looking for the girl.

The vampire sneers and -- as it speaks the following -- one by one, the OTHERS drop from the sky, flanking him. They're scraggly, a little undernourished.

LEAD VAMPIRE
Look at us -- Living in ruin, forced to feed off the blood of animals. We once scoured this land. We were warriors...we were Gods!

PRIEST
You were murderers.

LEAD VAMPIRE
We were what nature made us.
(flashes his fangs)
I recommend you leave immediately...You are not welcome here.

ONE BLACK FIGURE still flies above. Like a vulture, it circles Hicks. Marking him.

PRIEST

We're not going anywhere until you tell us where she is.

LEAD VAMPIRE

Then you aren't going anywhere.

If there was a tumbleweed in the vicinity this is when it would blow by. A tense BEAT then...Priest pulls out a BLACK BOOK.

PRIEST

"Yea though I walk through the Valley Of The Shadow Of Death I will fear no Evil -- "

The vampires laugh. Fangs glinting.

LEAD VAMPIRE

-- Your words mean nothing to us, Priest.

And now we see the book's actually hollow on the inside, filled with dozens of little STAR-METAL CROSSES.

PRIEST

(whispers)

Forgive me.

In one quick motion Priest scoops a handful, snapping his wrist and --

THE CROSSES

CUT through the air, heading straight for the BLACK FIGURE. It SQUEALS as the metals SHRED it like hot coals through butter, butchering it apart, the pieces raining down around Hicks, crashing to the ground.

And then all hell breaks loose.

The Nightshade Vampires hiss. Bearing their fangs like cobras and taking to the air with a SHRIEK. Attacking.

Frightened beyond shit-all-belief -- Hicks FIRES wildly, chasing the creatures with his gunfire. His bullets whistling harmlessly through the air.

WHOOSH! A vampire swoops towards him, fangs bared, claws ready to rip.

PRIEST

Leaps at the creature just in time, driving it to the ground. In one brutal motion he straddles it, twisting its head at a horrible angle.

He turns to Hicks.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Focus.

And with that he's gone, rolling across the ground like a boulder and LEAPING at TWO DARTING VAMPIRES.

HICKS

Dazed, watches as the vampire's body erupts with death spasms, arms and legs kicking the air in a violent frenzy until finally all life drains away.

HICKS
(under his breath)
Jesus.

Another VAMPIRE careens towards him. Coming in low, crawling across the ground on all fours. Fangs dripping.

Hicks FIRES off a mess of bullets, peppering the creature as it flails backwards screeching. He snaps out the empty shells, reloading almost supernaturally fast, firing off a shot that SPLITS the Vampire's throat.

He twirls the gun, flipping it into his holster.

This leaves only --

THE LEAD VAMPIRE

Perched atop his crypt like a gargoyle, raging at Priest and Hicks from the depths of hell with a HORRIBLE SHRIEK.

In full fury, he LEAPS and flies away, the sounds of his torment echoing throughout the canyon as he vanishes into the night sky.

HICKS (CONT'D)
Should we go after him?

PRIEST
No need. He'll die at first light.

Priest goes to the Familiars still lying on the ground. They're sobbing, having lost everything in the world that mattered. Completely wrecked. He grabs one by the scruff of the neck.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
No more masters. Just you and me.

He raises a knife, pressing it to the Familiar's skin.

FAMILIAR
(frightened beyond belief)
-- The metal beast! She's in the metal
beast!

PRIEST
Make sense.

FAMILIAR
(jabbering)
The smoke. Look for the smoke --

SHARP CLAWS

Suddenly RIP across Priest's back! It's the Lead Vampire,
back for more. Claws digging into flesh.

Priest wrenches around and the two go at it. A fierce, feral
battle. The Vampire's fangs chattering inches from his neck.

Their bodies lock in a horrible struggle, rolling across the
Familiars. The Vampire's claws CHURNING into their bodies,
killing them instantly.

THE VAMPIRE

Throws Priest into a crypt, SMASHING him through the wall,
flying in after him. We hear the sounds of a BATTLE ROYALE
from inside. WHUMP! WHUMP! WHUMP! The walls buckle outward,
sounds like the fury of all hell being unleashed.

Then, suddenly, and more disturbingly...silence.

Hicks takes a step towards the crypt. Gun leveled. But --

PRIEST

Emerges through the hole, exhausted, the LEAD VAMPIRE'S HEAD in
his hand dangling by its hair.

He tosses the head and it rolls to Hicks' feet, fangs flashing
up at him. Hicks stares at the ghastly visage. Unnerved.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHTSHADE RESERVATION - LATER

A giant PYRE lights up the night, fed with the bodies of both Familiars and Vampires, Priest and Hicks silhouetted against the flames.

The two are silent, grimly going about their task -- It's obvious the skirmish has affected Hicks. Priest notices.

PRIEST

How's your arm?

HICKS

Lucky I guess. The blade didn't go that deep.

(fingering the bandage)

Don't know what got into those Familiars to attack like that. They're usually harmless.

Priest finds a KNIFE clutched in a dead Familiar's hand, tucks it in his waistband.

PRIEST

Usually.

A BEAT as they listen to the popping of the fire. A tension hanging between them. Then --

HICKS

You did this on purpose, didn't you? You knew we wouldn't be out before sundown. You wanted this to happen.

PRIEST

You don't have the stomach for it -- head back to Halbridge right now.

Hicks glares at Priest.

HICKS

The stomach I got. I was in the Rangers two years. Even fought in the Boondock Uprising...I saw some crazy things. Horrible things.

(softer)

I just ain't never seen anything like this.

PRIEST

Killing a vampire isn't like killing a man. They come at you like an animal. Tooth for tooth.

(MORE)

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Claw for claw -- Blood, skin, bones.
They take all of it.
(beat)
If you let 'em.

Hicks studies Priest, in the firelight he looks tired. Old even.

HICKS
It comes easy to you...don't it?

PRIEST
What?

HICKS
Killin'.

PRIEST
It just comes. Easy's got nothing to do with it.

He pokes at the fire, it CRACKLES, feeding off the bodies. Something about the battle's opened him up. His guard's down.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
I take no pleasure in it. Killing. I know I've done more than my share -- Whatever they do to me I have it coming.

HICKS
(realizing)
You think they took her because of you...don't you?

Priest stands. Cracks his neck.

PRIEST
Give me your gun.

HICKS
What?

PRIEST
Give me your gun.

HICKS
Why? You gonna shoot me now?

Priest's stare is piercing. A pause then Hicks pulls his six shooter, handing it to him. Priest checks the chambers, giving it a quick spin.

PRIEST

Don't anticipate the trajectory of your target. Know it.

He stomps his foot into the fire, launching a GLOWING COAL OF ASH into the air. Priest quickly raises the gun and FIRES, the ash explodes, raining fiery red sparks.

HICKS

You're teaching me to shoot?

PRIEST

I'm teaching you to kill vampires. No more wild shots --

HICKS

My ass! In case you didn't notice I was pretty damn good out there! And I sure as hell didn't see you doin' much when I had that blade buried in my arm.

(spits)

Must've been too busy "focusing".

Priest hands the gun back to Hicks.

PRIEST

There's always two points. A and B. Know the points and you'll know your target.

HICKS

Ain't nothin' but a bunch of bullshit.

PRIEST

I see ten crypts...but only eight vampires. We find the missing, we'll find Lucy. What's the next nearest town?

HICKS

Jericho. It's clear across the Plains. Gonna be a rough ride.

PRIEST

Then you better get a good night's sleep. This bunch was easy, their bloodlines watered down by man.

(beat)

Whoever took Lucy was a whole different breed.

He tosses another body on the fire, tiny sparks floating into the night as --

We hear the Banshee call of a STEAM WHISTLE, sharp and shrill as we CUT TO:

EXT. DUNKIRK RAIL - NIGHT

A STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

Bearing down like death itself, teeth of the behemoth's grill leering like a skull. Thick clouds of heavy smoke burst from its blast pipe, rails SQUEALING as the train RACES past.

There are no windows, just an unblinking black juggernaut, midnight willed into a steel and iron frame. Terrifying.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

As the cars BLAST PAST THE CAMERA we see each is filled with rows of BLACK COFFINS. A TALL FIGURE walks between them, wearing a BLACK TOP HAT AND CAPE.

We only see him from behind.

PALE ARMS reach from within the coffins, fingers touching the hem of the Figure's cape as he walks past.

A FAMILIAR approaches.

FAMILIAR

A man came on board at the last stop.
Says he has something for you.

The Figure nods. We FOLLOW as he continues to the back of the car, sliding open the door --

INT. DINING CAR - CONTINUOUS

Fine china on oak tables. The SNAKE OIL SALESMAN we saw back in Halbridge sits, nervously, in a plush chair. Candles light the car, casting the room in a surreal flicker.

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN

You told me to come to you if I had any information.

(smiles)

I have some.

Silently, the Figure sits down across from him.

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN (CONT'D)

But before I tell you...and I hate to bring this up -- there is the small matter regarding compensation.

(leaning forward)

(MORE)

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN (CONT'D)
Now your group's been REAL good for
business so, of course, I'm willing to cut
you a deal --

The Figure suddenly LUNGES, grabbing the salesman by the
throat, teeth clicking inches from the man's neck. WE STILL
DO NOT SEE HIS FACE.

BLACK HAT
I can SMELL the blood racing through your
veins...Smells like dinner.

The salesman starts to shake.

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN
(voice quavering)
A-After you snatched that girl outside
Halbridge...two nights later -- a Priest
s-showed up.

BLACK HAT
A Priest?

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN
He was meetin' with the local sheriff. A
real shitkicker -- Booted me out of town
before I could make a single sell.

A pause...and then the Figure laughs. The salesman not sure
how to react.

SNAKE OIL SALESMAN (CONT'D)
W-What's so funny?

The Figure BURIES his teeth in the man's neck, taking a deep,
deep drink, having his fill, dropping the body to the floor
with a thud.

THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO FOLLOW as the Figure walks to the
back of the car, sliding open the door --

INT. ASSEMBLY CAR - CONTINUOUS

A sliver of light lands on --

LUCY

Lying on the floor, her face streaked with tears. Vestiges
of the girl we met earlier already lost.

LUCY
I won't tell anyone if you let me out...I
promise.
(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)
(nods)
I won't even go to the police.

BLACK HAT
You're in here for your own protection...If I let you out of this car you'll be torn apart a piece at a time.

He walks to her, face still hidden in shadow. She starts to cry, pulling back to the wall. Angry.

LUCY
My uncle's a Priest! One of the best.
He'll come after you!

The Figure laughs. Bending down to her level --

BLACK HAT
I'm absolutely counting on it.

And now we get our first look at her captor. A cross tattoo shadows his face.

The mark of the Priest.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETARY (HALBRIDGE) - DAY

ENGINES SCREAMING Priest and Hicks BLAZE across the playa.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

WE WATCH as the sun crests the horizon and rises quickly across the sky. Clouds whip past at incredible speeds, time unfolding like a hallucinogenic until we're faced with --

THE PLAINS

They sit parked on a bluff, the emptiness making Hick's eyes ache. A more desolate view couldn't be found in all of hell.

HICKS
Walkin' Pete talked about this place --
said it used to be really somethin'.
Everythin' growin' green as a goddamn dollar bill.

(snorts)
'Course we had to go and screw it up by poisonin' everythin' -- nothin' pretty survives this world...nothin' decent anyways.

(frowns)
Just wish I could'a seen it.

Priest pulls out a canteen of water, takes a sip. Hands it to Hicks.

PRIEST

How's your arm?

HICKS

(hiding it from him)
Sore. Cut's still open.

As Hicks hands the canteen back, Priest suddenly grabs his arm --
It's completely healed. Not even a scar.

PRIEST

You're a halfbreed.

A BEAT as Hicks looks to the ground, when he speaks, it's in a voice just below his breath.

HICKS

My grandmother...she was raped. Nobody knows -- It's recessive in my family. No bloodthirst. No light sensitivity. I'm not proud...but it's a part of me. Ain't nothin' I can do.

(looks at Priest)
I woulda told you...just didn't want you treatin' me no different.

It hangs there...the silence stretching like a rope, then --

Priest REVS his cycle, a flurry of dust kicking up as he speeds away. HOLD ON HICKS -- Eyes stinging, he watches Priest.

Finally he starts his bike, following.

EXT. WASTELAND (THE PLAINS) - DAY

A SERIES OF SHOTS AS -

A. Priest inspects a TIRE TREAD in the sand, a cluster of clouds gathering in the sky behind him.

B. A PAIR OF CRACKED BLACK GOGGLES half-buried in the dust. The kind used by a motorcycle rider.

C. Hicks pulls a TORN PIECE OF CLOTHING (LUCY'S DRESS?) stashed in a rock crevice, he holds it up to Priest, GUNNING his engine as we CUT TO --

EXT. WASTELAND (THE PLAINS) - LATER

Priest and Hicks' BARRELING through the dust. Up ahead, something materializes in the desert --

A TIN STRUCTURE

Must be a mirage. Hicks blinks, can't believe his eyes. It looks abandoned.

HICKS
Gotta be a desert rat.

They park their bikes about twenty feet from the rickety structure, Hicks stepping off his bike and approaching. Carefully.

HICKS (CONT'D)
Let me do the talkin'. The sun has a way of cookin' these people's brains so they ain't quite right --

BANG! A rifle shot kicks up dust at Hicks' feet.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hold it right there, mister!

Hicks freezes.

A BEAT as the front of the shack shows only a doorway hidden in shadow...then an OLD MAN emerges, Rifle in hand. He COCKS it, making a bead for Hick's head.

OLD MAN
Take another step and you'll be meetin' the Lord directly.

HICKS
Easy now old timer. I'm a sheriff.

The old man snorts, spitting a thick stream of tobacco, it sizzles when it hits the dust.

OLD MAN
Ain't no law out here but my own.

Calm and cool, Priest shifts in his seat, drawing his gaze.

THE MAN'S EYES WIDEN

Seeing Priest clearly now for the first time.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Praise The Lord.

Total attitude adjustment. He lowers the Rifle and smiles -- revealing a gap tooth smile wide enough to drive a herd of cattle through.

CUT TO:

INT. TIN SHACK - DAY

A dusty PHONOGRAPH playing a recording of an old-time spiritual, the record warped from the heat, distorting the voice as THE CAMERA PANS PAST hundreds of homemade CRUCIFIXES haphazardly nailed across the wall.

OLD MAN
Cleaned the place up a bit. Been years since I had any kind of company 'sides jackrabbits but I knew you was comin' -- Dreams don't lie.

Ignoring Hicks, the old man pours BLACK TEA into a rusty can, handing it to Priest.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Most people don't remember what you folk done -- Don't WANT to remember. But I do. I know what you can do.
(making the sign of the cross)
You are God's mighty sword fused into flesh. One of the chosen. Touched by His very hand so peace could finally come to this cursed land.

Hicks snorts.

HICKS
Sounds like a bunch of religious mumbo jumbo to me.

The old man stares fixedly at Priest.

OLD MAN
Now you tell the Clergy this here is an authentic miracle, I want it registered. It's mine.

PRIEST
Miracle?

OLD MAN

The Angels. Never seen so many lost souls, breaks my heart just to think of it. This ain't no place for nothin' divine.

The man's fevered belief unsettles Priest, he's unsure how to respond.

PRIEST

You saw angels?

OLD MAN

Sure as shit.

PRIEST

How many?

OLD MAN

Don't know, too many to count. Hundreds. Thousands. Some nights the sky was so thick you couldn't see the stars.

His eyes suddenly light up, remembering something.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Here! Look at this --

He goes to a shelf, it's been turned into a MAKESHIFT SHRINE -- rummaging through a jumbled collection of crucifixes, yellowed photographs, collected junk.

He pulls out a GLASS JAR containing SOMETHING MISSHAPEN floating in murky water, the old man proudly showing it to Priest and Hicks.

HICKS

What is it?

OLD MAN

It's their spoor! They'd be flyin' above and this stuff would drop from the sky like manna.

HICKS

-- That's angel shit?

OLD MAN

Scooped it up myself.
(offering it to Hicks)
You wanna hold it?

Hicks backs away, shaking his head.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Suit yourself.

Priest still doesn't know what to make of the man but he
senses something to be gained. He tries changing the subject.

PRIEST
These angels...did you ever see them
during the day?

OLD MAN
No, I reckon' that's when they'd go back
home for some shut eye -- Gettin' the
world ready for the rapture takes a lot
of work. Praise God.

PRIEST
Home?

OLD MAN
The castle --

He points out the window, far away, atop a craggy peak sits
the remains of a CASTLE --

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Beautiful place. Wonder of the world. I
used to watch 'em every night, takin' to
the sky in all of God's glory.
(leans forward)
I never would disturb 'em though. God's
children like their privacy.

He winks, smiling that crazy smile. Priest considers the
possibility of a lead here -- but Hicks just gazes at the old
man like he's nuts as we CUT TO:

EXT. TIN SHACK - LATER

The boys mounting up their bikes, about to head out. The old man
approaches Priest.

OLD MAN
Wait! I want you to have somethin'
before you go --

He presses a HOMEMADE CROSS into Priest's hand. It's a real
beauty, flecked with colored stones. A lot of love and care
went into this one.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Remember, a man comes into this world with one thing. His soul. He's lucky if he's still got it when he leaves.

Priest pockets the cross, REVVING his cycle and with a final nod -- he and Hicks speed into the wasteland. The old man watches, his cracked face squinting as the sun flashes off the metal of the machines.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUNKIRK RAIL (WASTELAND) - DAY

The vampire train shooting down the track, blown tumbleweeds catching the scrub brush as it races by.

INT. TRAIN CAR - SAME TIME

Lucy is on her knees, scratching her nails against the wood floor. Testing it. Splintery shards come up in tiny clusters.

From outside, the sound of a padlock opening, a chain dropping to the floor. Lucy quickly sits, making innocent.

A SERVANT FAMILIAR enters, carrying a tray of food, his eyes grotesquely roam Lucy's body.

Lucy smiles sweetly, taking the tray.

LUCY

Thank you.

The Familiar turns to leave.

WHAP! Lucy SLAMS the tray over his head and he collapses to the floor.

She makes a run for it. But the Familiar manages to grab her ankle knocking her down, she kicks at him as he holds fast, hissing.

Two more FAMILIARS run in and grab her arms, wrestling her to the floor. She struggles furiously but it's no use, she screams as we CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE - LATER

A sad collection of crumbling stone walls and turrets. All the more surreal for rising up in the absolute nothing of the wasteland.

Priest and Hicks stand, surveying the ancient ruin. Hicks can't help but laugh.

HICKS

(sarcastic)

Yep. Truly a wonder of the world...good thing we listened to the fossil. Don't know how we'd find Lucy without him.

PRIEST

Vampires sometimes use abandoned structures as a perch.

(looks at Hicks)

Watch for booby traps.

And with that he enters the --

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Desert shrubs sprout like weeds between the stones, once proud turrets rotting to dust, everything bleached by the weather. Whatever this place was -- the desert owns it now.

HICKS

Why we listen' to that crackpot? Crazy fucker's so blinded by faith he's batshit. That's called a zealot in my book.

(beat)

I'm startin' to think you might be one yourself. You ever think 'bout that?

Priest doesn't respond, squinting his eyes.

At the opposite end of the courtyard is an opening. It leads into a CHAMBER of some kind.

INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Musty. Cool. Dark. Walls rising high into a cone as sunlight streams in from an opening in the top. Hicks and Priest enter, stepping carefully over PILES OF GARBAGE littering the floor.

HICKS

This is bullshit. Lucy's been gone five days -- every stupid minute we waste here is a minute more she gets farther away.

Priest turns and sees a STONE STAIRCASE, uneven steps leading downwards...too dark to tell where though.

PRIEST
Stay here. If anything comes up the steps that isn't me -- Shoot it.

Before Hicks can reply, Priest heads down the stairs, darkness swallowing him with every step.

HICKS
Great.

DOWN THE STAIRS

The air seems thicker here, the darkness claustrophobic. Enveloping. It takes a moment for Priests' eyes to adjust.

A CATAcomb

Actually more a cave. Miles and miles. Twisting, jagged and moist. Endless corners, weaving into a dark and hideous maze.

Priest heads into it.

INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - SAME

Frustrated, Hicks kicks at the garbage.

There's something underneath.

He brushes aside the refuse, uncovering a bunch of SMALL WHITE SHAPES, breath catching as he realizes what it is:

Bones.

INT. CATAcomb - SAME

It's quiet.

Priest moves through the darkness, footsteps not even a whisper, heading deeper and deeper into the labyrinth as --

INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - SAME

Hicks is now at the chamber wall, running his hand along it, feels grooves lining its surface.

Stepping back, he sees they form an image of some kind. Hard to make it out in the darkness.

He leafs through the garbage, pulling out a piece of BROKEN GLASS as --

INT. CATAcomb - SAME

Priest turns a jagged corner and looks down the longest, most narrow tunnel yet. A light shines at the end. A TORCH. Flickering gently.

A SHADOW brushes past the light, moving so fast it barely registers. Could just be a trick of the eye. Or not.

Priest moves towards it.

INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - SAME

Hicks angles the broken glass under the light, reflecting a faint beam onto the wall, revealing a HUGE CARVING cut into the stone:

A fanged vampire. Swooping over a frightened village.
Primitive but very creepy. We linger on the image, the terror of the people, the viciousness of the creature. Truly horrific.

INT. CATAcomb - SAME

Quiet. Just the low howl of a breeze moving through the tunnel.

Priest walks into an ANIMAL PEN of sorts, a hay-like substance covering the floor, the smell of something bestial. He covers his nose, looking around, something in the corner catching his eye --

TWO BODIES

splayed across the ground like rag dolls. He crouches to take a closer look...

WHAM!

SOMETHING barrels into him with superhuman force!

Acting on instinct, Priest FOLDS AND ROLLS. Kicking the thing off him and PUSHING off the wall for a blistering recovery.

Whatever it is, it's fast. Quickly countering for every move he gives, neither able to get the upper hand. Too dark to make out what it is.

Priest locks his arms around the shape's arms, SLAMMING it against the wall, illuminating it under the torch light.

IT'S A FEMALE PRIEST

A BEAT as they stand staring at each other, unsure what to say. The cross tattoo covers her face, shadowing fierce eyes. Every inch a warrior.

Time seems to stop for these two. Their whole dark history -- their bond -- passing between them in one glance.

PRIESTESS
How did you find me?

Priest doesn't reply. She narrows her eyes, suspicious.

PRIESTESS (CONT'D)
Did the Clergy send you?

PRIEST
No.
(beat)
Why would they?

She nods towards the bodies, we now see they're VAMPIRE CORPSES.

PRIESTESS
I've been busy.

Off Priest's reaction we CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - SAME TIME

Hicks looking up to see the light from the hole in the ceiling winking out. The sun is setting.

Slipping, he drops the piece of glass, cutting his finger. Drawing blood.

HICKS
Shit.

He wipes the blood on his pants, not noticing as a A LARGE SHAPE looms in the archway behind him...

INT. CATACOMB - SAME

The two warriors eye each other, the air heavy between them.

PRIESTESS
If you didn't come for me...why are you here?

PRIEST
I should be asking you the same question.

The bestial smell stings their nostrils, smells good.

PRIESTESS

There's another one around here somewhere.

PRIEST

Where?

PRIESTESS

I don't know...but it's not like the others.

They're interrupted by the sound of GUNFIRE echoing off the tunnel walls. Priest turns.

PRIEST

Hicks.

He starts down the tunnel. The Priestess quickly following.

INT. STAIRS LEADING INTO THE CATAcomb - NIGHT

Hicks is sprawled at the base of the stairs, bloodied and bruised. Both guns pointed at --

THE TOP OF THE STAIRS

SOMETHING is lurking. A hulking shadow, sounds like a rabid bull. We catch the TIP OF A CLAW scraping at the stone floor.

Priest approaches from down the tunnel, senses on full alert.

PRIEST

It's too big to fit down here. That's why you're still alive.

HICKS

What the hell is that thing?!

PRIEST

A vampire.

HICKS

I'm not stupid. Vampires don't look like that.

PRIESTESS (O.S.)

They used to.

The Priestess steps out from behind Priest. Startling Hicks.

HICKS
Who the hell are you?!

She doesn't even bother to respond, just shooting a look as the two warriors bound

UP THE STEPS

Charging into battle. Priest BURSTS from the stairway LEAPING up and over as the Priestess rolls off to the side. He lands beside her, the two turning to face down --

THE VAMPIRE

A fearsome creature -- much more terrifying than the Nightshade variety. Bigger, more ferocious. The ancient cousin to the more modern vampire.

The beast opens its mouth and lets loose with a SCREAM, its breath vile.

THE PRIESTS

Split up. The Priestess LEAPING to the stone wall and climbing up the rock. Priest goes the opposite way, ROLLING across the floor, keeping low.

THE VAMPIRE

With a screech, goes for the Priestess. Crawling up the wall, hunched like a rat, talons ferociously digging into rock.

Coordinating an attack wordlessly, the Priests make their move:

THE PRIESTESS

Lets go of the wall, PLUMMETING straight towards the vampire, the creature FLASHING its fangs in anticipation.

PRIEST

Leaps from below, darting up the rock, taking advantage of the distraction, landing on the creature's back and wrapping his arms around its neck. Going for the deathlock.

With a SHRIEK the creature WHIPS its head with crack force sending Priest flying. The Priestess, still in mid-drop, CATCHES him and they both hit the ground with their feet.

PRIESTESS
Should we lead it into open air? More room to maneuver.

PRIEST
Better to keep it contained.

The vampire's lathered into an animal frenzy now, wailing and scuttling around the circular wall in crazy patterns. Suddenly -- with a stone shattering BOOM! it BURSTS through the hole, FLYING out into the night.

PRIESTESS
Or not.

They race outside.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

The Priests look up to find the vampire clawed around a turret, shadowed in the moonlight.

WHOOSH! Great leathery wings unfold from its back as it SWOOPS low, coming in for the kill.

PRIEST

Darts behind a boulder just in time. The creature's talons SCRAPING at the rock before it soars back to the sky.

He pulls out his bible, grabbing and tossing a handful of --

THROWING CROSSES

CUTTING through the air, sparkling in the moonlight, beautiful. BUT --

They BOUNCE harmlessly off the creature's wings, knifing back to the ground, imbedding deep in the stone, Priest having to nimbly dodge his own weaponry.

THE CREATURE HOWLS! Blazing straight for him.

Undaunted. Priest looks at the Priestess and folds his hands into the prayer position, leveling his breath, pulse slowing as the screaming beast bares down like a freight train!

THE PRIESTESS

Quickly scoops up TWO LARGE ROCKS -- HURTLING them towards the vampire. HER EYES LOCK WITH PRIEST'S as she too folds her hands into the prayer position.

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK

Silence. Then --

The sound of a heartbeat.

The juncture between instants. A fissure.

A BRIGHT FLASH -- we see Priest LEAPING through the air -- EVERYTHING AROUND HIM FROZEN -- the creature, the rocks, the Priestess.

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK

A BRIGHT FLASH again -- and now Priest is using the frozen rocks as STEPS -- LAUNCHING his body until he is above the creature --

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK

A BRIGHT FLASH again -- and now Priest is ON the behemoth, he pulls out the FAMILIAR'S KNIFE, twirling it in his hand --

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK

And WHAM! we fuse back into real time as the creature CRASHES to the ground. Its DECAPITATED HEAD rolling to a stop, face frozen in a horrible rictus.

A BEAT

as the world seems to hold its breath then --

Priest lands in a crouch, dropping next to the Priestess, her hands still locked in the prayer position. She turns to him.

PRIESTESS

Not bad.

Suddenly the CREATURE'S BODY erupts into a blistering death spasm! Talons clacking like STRAIGHT RAZORS, flailing dangerously close to the two of them.

BAM!

A single bullet pierces its heart and the body collapses with a THUD. Once and for all -- dead.

ANGLE ON HICKS in the archway, smoke coming off his gun. He looks at the Priests.

HICKS

Point A...meet point fuckin' B.

He smiles, twirling his six shooters back into their holsters.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - LATER

Hicks examining the fallen creature, poking at the carcass with his gun. In some crazy, distant way he's related to this thing.

He raises his hand, comparing it to the beast's talon.
Shakes his head.

ATOP THE CASTLE WALL

Priest and the Priestess stare out at the Wasteland, uncomfortable with looking at each other.

PRIEST
This was a Pureblood.

PRIESTESS
We both know that's impossible -- They
haven't existed for a millennium.
(beat)
What's going on here?

PRIEST
...I don't know.

A BEAT filled with awkward silence -- when the Priestess speaks it comes as a relief for both. An unloosening of things long held tight.

PRIESTESS
Sector Seven was the only place I could
find work. Waste Management.
(beat)
Nobody else would hire me. "No
applicable skills."

PRIEST
I heard that one too.

PRIESTESS
A week ago, a family camping out on the Perimeter approached me -- Told me vampires were terrorizing their village and that the government wouldn't do anything about it.

PRIEST
Did you go to The Clergy?

PRIESTESS
They wouldn't see me.
(looks down)
(MORE)

PRIESTESS (CONT'D)

By the time I got to the village it was completely razed. Nothing left. Women. Children. All dead...they didn't even bother to feed.

(beat)

I've been on their trail ever since...could be the same group who took your niece.

PRIEST

Could be.

The Priestess glances towards Hicks.

PRIESTESS

Does the lawman know what you'll do if you find her?

PRIEST

He knows.

PRIESTESS

He'll try to stop you.

PRIEST

He won't be able to.

She pauses a moment, regarding him.

PRIESTESS

You know, some nights I still dream we're back on the frontlines...I wake up, I'm sweating...my muscles all clenched like I'm ready for something -- But I don't know what.

PRIEST

Me too.

PRIESTESS

Nights like that...I don't go back to sleep.

(beat)

But on other nights...the good nights -- I dream about other things.

PRIEST

...Like what?

PRIESTESS

You.

Priest stares at her, not sure what to say. Lucky for him, the moment gets interrupted by --

HICKS
(shouting from below)
-- Hey you guys better get a look at this!

The warriors lock eyes, knowing something's been started -- but unsure of what.

They head down the stone steps.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Hicks is lifting up one of the creature's wings. There's some sort of BLACK MARK on its skin.

PRIESTESS
It must be a birthmark of some kind.

HICKS
That ain't no birthmark -- it's a brand.

The Priestess studies the mark, something about it making her skin crawl. Maybe because it's in the shape of a top hat.

PRIESTESS
There's something else you need to see...

CUT TO:

INT. CATAcomb

Carrying a torch, the Priestess leads Priest and Hicks through the maze, the deeper they go the more subterranean it feels. Bowels of the earth.

PRIESTESS
I found this just before I was attacked --

AN UNDERGROUND CHAMBER

Huge. Cavernous. Our group appearing as tiny shapes set against the awesome scale of the place. Hundreds of LARGE HOLES gouged into the walls, stretching as far as torchlight allows. An incredible sight.

PRIEST
It's a tomb. Big enough for an army.

HICKS
Guess they're not as endangered as everyone thought.
(MORE)

HICKS (CONT'D)
(beat)
But where'd they go?

We hear a LOUD SHRIEK - and a MASSIVE SWARM OF BATS sweep through the depths of the chamber, black wings fluttering.

PRIEST
Only one way to find out...

INT. CAVE - LATER

Our group moving deeper into the dark cavern, a moan of wind echoing off the gorge wall behind them, massive black stalactites hanging overhead. Very creepy.

They move quickly, Priest ahead of the other two. Hicks gazes at the Priestess, admiring her body. Any man would. He works up his courage and approaches her. Quietly.

HICKS
Are Priests allowed to, you know...have
relations?

PRIESTESS
We take a vow of celibacy at inception.

Hicks can't be sure -- did she just look at Priest when she said that?

HICKS
Look...I was uh, wondering -- how did he do that little stunt back there?

PRIESTESS
All Priests can do it.

HICKS
Including you?

She nods.

HICKS (CONT'D)
So what's the trick?

PRIESTESS
No trick. You just have to remember.

HICKS
Remember...what?

PRIESTESS
Time is relative.

Priest snaps up his hand, cutting off their conversation, something strange up ahead -- He slowly moves forward, the tunnel sharply dropping, feeding into a --

HUGE CHAMBER

Not like the cave, this is more earthen. Like the inside of a wasp nest, curved walls made of dirt and spit, Priest covering his nose and mouth as he's hit with a massive stench.

A GIANT SHADOW

Looms before him, we don't see what it is.

As the Priestess and Hicks enter the chamber, Hicks coughs, reeling from the smell, the Priestess wrapping a cloth around her mouth -- the CAMERA focusing only on their expressions as they take in the horrible spectacle before them.

PRIEST

You said the next nearest town was Jericho.

HICKS

Yeah.

PRIEST

Then we better go see.

HICKS

...See what?

PRIESTESS

-- What they left of it.

PUSH IN ON HICKS -- knots of rope tightening in his stomach...only now realizing how truly black the path before him will be.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUNKIRK RAIL - DAY

The NIGHT TRAIN thundering across the rails, almost obscene in the bright sunlight. An intruder from the darkness.

We hear a SCRATCHING sound, something scraping. Heavy breathing as we MOVE INTO...

INT. ASSEMBLY CAR - SAME

THE SERVANT FAMILIAR slides the door open, carrying food for Lucy, no tray this time.

But she's not there.

He SCREECHES, dropping the food as he runs to a HOLE ripped in the wood floor, smatterings of blood around the edges. It's not very big, just enough for a small body to fit through.

The Familiar sticks his head through the opening and --

RAILROAD TRACKS

CLACK past at a furious speed, inches from his head! The noise is deafening.

LUCY (O.S.)

Hey...

The Familiar turns -- Lucy's perched inside one of the JOISTS lining the underside of the train.

KRACK! She lets loose with a well-placed KICK, snapping his head back so he catches on the track. With a scream, he's quickly SUCKED out the train, pulverized on the track.

Lucy's covers her mouth, her nails an ugly bloody mass.

She's come this far, time to go the rest.

She manages to carefully crawl from joist to joist, moving along the underside of the train, her body just centimeters from the passing track.

SHE SLIPS

Catching herself just in time. Her eyelids practically brushing the wood.

Taking a deep breath, she manages to hoist herself through the rest of the way finally making it to the CABOOSE.

She pulls herself up onto the back of the car. Now what? The train is blazing past the wasteland at an incredible speed.

Only one thing to do.

She makes the sign of the cross, closes her eyes and JUMPS --

EXT. WASTELAND (EDGE OF THE PLAINS) - DAY

A dustorm.

The plain's a shifting veil of sand, parting to reveal a vista of dunes, wind shipping across them.

As quickly as it opened the veil closes again, shifting to reveal OUR TRIO plowing through, blast goggles and respirators covering their faces. The Priestess riding a cycle identical to Priest's.

In the distance we can make out a cluster of structures as they arrive at Jericho...

EXT. JERICHO - DAY

Riding into town. The storm making it difficult to see anything as they idle onto main street. It's deserted -- The only sound a saloon door creaking noisily in the wind.

Ominous signs left in the vampires' wake are everywhere -- BROKEN DOORS, SHATTERED WINDOWS, OVERTURNED VEHICLES.

PRIEST

We separate. Go through each building, see what we find.

HICKS

I'll start with the sheriff.

PRIESTESS

Be careful. Just because it's daylight doesn't mean it's safe.

Hicks nods, tightening the twin BANDOLEERS across his chest.

EXT. JAIL - DAY

Everything is eerily quiet, just the sound of the wind.

Hicks crouches just outside the door, examining SPENT SHELL CASINGS littering the walkway. He pulls out his six-shooter, pushing the door open with his gun, stepping inside --

INT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

The place is a mess.

DUST BLOWN IN FROM THE STORM COVERS EVERYTHING, broken furniture scattered everywhere, glass littering the floor. Whatever went down here -- someone put up a hell of a fight.

HICKS

'Damn.

He shakes his head, heading towards the holding area as --

INT. BROTHEL - SAME TIME

The Priestess walks in, flurries of yellow dust swirling in her wake, filling the room.

If the jail was a disaster zone, this place is just plain creepy. Red sofas, red curtains, hell, even red wine. Everything set up for a great time...just no people.

A PIANO sits nestled in the corner, she walks to it and runs her finger across the dust covered keys.

It comes up wet and red. Blood.

MUSIC SUDDENLY BURSTS FROM THE PIANO

The plinking keys playing by themselves, activated by pneumatic pegs on a rotating paper roll, filling the lonely room with tin-pan music.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The sound of a record skipping.

Priest steps through a doorway, the door already ripped off its hinges. Broken furniture and glass.

It's obvious a FAMILY lived here, children's clothes and wooden toys messily strewn across the floor.

He walks to an OLD PHONOGRAPH sitting on the window sill, still playing, placing the needle back in its cradle.

That's when something out the window catches his eye...

EXT. JERICHO/MAIN STREET - DAY

Hicks, done searching, meets up with the Priestess in the middle of the street, he's pretty disturbed. Wind howling around him.

HICKS

There ain't nobody left. Nobody.

PRIESTESS

(ominous)

Too many mouths to feed.

HICKS

Where's Priest?

But the Priestess's already focused on something else, gazing at something behind the general store. He turns to see what it is.

PRIEST

On the ground KNEELING. Head down, engaging in some kind of prayer.

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS as they slowly approach, wondering what the hell is going on. As they get closer they see the full picture:

Before Priest are THREE LARGE WOODEN CROSSES, A NAKED BODY ON EACH, crucified. Because of the swirling sand it's hard to make out their faces but it's obvious the poor souls are already dead.

Immediately the Priestess drops beside Priest, joining him -- And it is only now that we get a good look at the crucifieds' faces --

They're Priests.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE WASTELANDS - DAY

Bare feet running on the salt-flats.

It's Lucy. Covered in dirt, battered and bruised but chugging along. There is absolutely NOTHING out here, only Lucy and

A BLACK FIGURE DROPS SILENTLY FROM THE SKY BEHIND HER

It wears a BLACK COAT, fluttering in the wind as it touches down, the fabric cascading across the earth in long dark folds.

The Figure's face is completely covered by a BLACK COWBOY HAT. The only thing we can see is a CHEROOT -- Sticking out from where the mouth would be.

A brief moment as the tip of the cigar glows, a puff of smoke exhaled. It drops to the ground, silver spurs making a slight CHING sound as a BLACK BOOT stamps it out.

Lucy hears the sound and turns just in time to see -

VOOM! A THICK CHAIN SHOOTING OUT from within the Figure's coat, a HUGE METAL FINGERED CLAW at its end! The claw SLAMS into Lucy, thick fingers CLAMPING around her, knocking her to the ground.

She digs her nails into the earth but it's no use as the chain DRAGS her backwards and she quickly disappears INTO the coat with a SCREAM. The folds enveloping her in a dark embrace.

In one graceful sweep, the Black Figure leaps to the sky. Quickly disappearing.

We see the cheroot on the ground. Spent. The only evidence that anyone or anything was ever out here at all.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JERICHO - DAY

Caught between sheets of swirling dust and sand, the images like hallucinations, moments of ritual and grief --

- A. The crucified Priests taken down from their crosses, their naked bodies like ragdolls.
- B. The corpses now wrapped in white cloth, carefully placed amongst the makeshift pyre.
- C. Flames engulfing the bodies, a twisty column of smoke rising, the sun and clouds painting the sky pink and gold.

OUR TRIO stands before the pyre gazing into the fire, it POPS consuming more of the bodies, if the Priests listen close enough they can hear the end of an era.

HICKS

Don't make no sense. What were they
doin' out here?

PRIESTESS

The same thing as us.

(beat)

Someone's drawing us out.

HICKS

Who?

The Priests just stare into the fire, not having any idea.

HICKS (CONT'D)

I imagine you'll have to go back to the
Cities, inform the Clergy.

A sudden silence.

PRIEST

We're not going back.

The Priestess looks at him, he speaks for her as well but she's still shocked to hear the words out loud. A lifetime of conditioning.

PRIESTESS
We'll burn for this.

PRIEST
(looking at the pyre)
We already are.

Something in the flames catches the Priestess's eye, in the charred remains of one of the corpses -- SOMETHING'S GLOWING.

She wraps her arm, plunging her hand through the bones, pulling out the object. Quickly, she tosses it into a barrel of water. It hisses, steam rising as it cools.

Priest reaches into the barrel, his hand emerging with a METAL SPIKE.

HICKS
It's a railroad spike. My pop used to work boxcars before they shut down -- Why the hell would anyone wanna swallow that?

A beat as Priest puts it together.

PRIEST
He wanted us to find it. It's a clue.

PRIESTESS
Where's the closest track?

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL - DAY

Hicks pulls a LARGE MAP off the wall, blowing off a layer of dust, drawing a line across the paper with his finger.

HICKS
The Dunkirk Line. It starts all the way in the backcountry, bought the ore from the deep mines. There were about five stops along the route. I think.

He draws several Xs along the line. His hand coming to a stop on a particular forboding PATCH OF MOUNTAINS.

HICKS (CONT'D)
Looks like Jericho was the last town it
glances before heading around the Linwood
Mountains...Then it goes to the last stop.

PRIEST
Where?

He draws one final X at the end of the line. Looks up.

HICKS
The Cities.

So there it is. The Priestess narrows her eyes.

PRIESTESS
They must have been picking up different
factions along the way. Moving during
the day, feeding at night.

HICKS
But headin' to the Cities is suicide.
The sun will kill 'em -- there's nowhere
to hide.

Priest gazes at the map, deeply troubled.

PRIEST
They won't have to.

And with the SHRIEK of the train whistle we CUT TO:

EXT. WASTELAND (DUNKIRK RAIL) - DAY

The Night Train barreling down the track, blasting along on
its grim trajectory. Suddenly --

THE CAMERA

Overtakes the train. Snaking along the rail at an incredible
speed, leaving the train in its tracks (sorry) as it blisters
across the Wasteland through craggy mountains and finally
ending up in

THE CITIES

And it is only now that we see exactly what Priest means. A
THICK CLOUD OF INDUSTRIAL SMOKE covers the metropolis.

There is no sun.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN CAR

A BLACK COWBOY HAT coolly tilted down, exposing a cheroot clutched between thin lips. A trail of smoke lazily floats upwards.

DARK FIGURE

A fine catch yes?
(the voice is oily, a dark whisper)

She'd be dead if not for me...swallowed by the wasteland.

We see Lucy on the floor at the Figure's feet, his pale hand runs calmly through her hair.

From the shadows, Black Hat steps forward, looking down at Lucy. She struggles but the hand tightens its grip.

BLACK HAT

What do you want for her?

And now her captor lifts his hat -- revealing paper-thin skin, eyes like black coal. This is RUNE, a bounty hunter.

RUNE

You know what I want.

Black Hat's eyes flick upwards, glinting in the candlelight.

BLACK HAT

Don't go too far, Rune.

RUNE

He comes for her still.

BLACK HAT

Of course he does.

RUNE

Let me have him.

BLACK HAT

No.

Rune smiles, revealing an impressive set of vampire fangs.

RUNE

I'm sure she'll fetch a nice price out in the Zone -- they don't care what condition their meat's in...as long as it's easy to chew.

Black Hat eyes him.

BLACK HAT
Don't get involved in this.

RUNE
I was involved long before you showed up.

(seething)
I've been waiting years for a chance at him...and now that he's here I find I have to ask a Priest's permission...

Like a snake, a finger of the claw emerges from the folds of his jacket, wrapping itself around Lucy's neck.

RUNE (CONT'D)
My how things have changed.

Ever so slightly, the metal finger SQUEEZES Lucy's throat, choking her.

RUNE (CONT'D)
I never cared about your war. Never got involved. Us halfbreeds. We were exiles -- rejected by both humans and vampires. All we wanted was a quiet place. But he wiped out my whole tribe.

(beat)
Maybe it's time to return the favor.

The metal finger wraps TIGHTER, Lucy gasps, the tension becoming unbearable until finally --

BLACK HAT
Fine. He's yours.

As if on command, the finger retreats back into the jacket, Lucy COLLAPSING to the floor coughing and choking.

RUNE
And -- she's yours.

He laughs, sounds like a death rattle, dropping the cigar to the floor, spurs chiming as he walks out the car door, long dark coat fluttering behind him, disappearing into the night.

BLACK HAT

Annoyed, picks up the still burning cigar, squeezing it in his hand. He turns to Lucy.

BLACK HAT

And as for you my dear...You're more trouble than I anticipated. Must be your uncle's blood in you.

(beat)

A shame he'll never see what you'll become. I would've loved to see his face.

And then he is upon her, saliva mixing with blood as he drinks.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTELAND - DAY

ROAR! Our trio plow through the scrubby desert growth, chewing up the dirt. The blood of their machines at full boil.

A SERIES OF INTERCUT SHOTS

The VAMPIRE TRAIN chugging along on its dark course, heading for the Cities.

Our crew hellbent on stopping 'em. The two locked on a fated path, blurring across the landscape as the sun crests across the sky DISSOLVING INTO:

EXT. WASTELAND - DUSK

Twilight.

Hicks and the two Priests ride past tumbleweed drifts, the surrounding desertscape golden in the fading light.

Ahead a forboding series of CRAGGY MOUNTAINS awaits, a WINDING TRAIL criss-crossing through the peaks.

They stop, their machines idling next to each other, taking stock of the huge task before them.

HICKS

Beggar's Pass...it ain't gonna be easy.

As if on cue the last rays of the sun wink out behind the mountain.

EXT. BEGGAR'S PASS - NIGHT

QUICK SHOTS AS THEY HEAD DEEP INTO THE MOUNTAIN

Headlight crossbeams leading the way, their cycles navigate the twisty trail, cutting across sheer canyon walls, teetering on the brink of an abyss, rock slides a constant threat.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEGGAR'S PASS CAMP - LATE NIGHT

They've set up camp for the night on the lip of a ridge.

Hicks and the Priestess sit by a fire dunking their feet in a nearby stream, the wear and tear of their journey evident on the sheriff's face.

Priest lies close by, asleep.

HICKS

If we push it hard we'll gain two days on 'em. Should be enough to get us a jump.

PRIESTESS

We need more than a jump. We need a miracle.

HICKS

That's the funny thing about time --

He dips his hand in the water and raises it, letting the liquid leak from between his fingers.

HICKS (CONT'D)

It's always runin' right through my fingers.

PRIESTESS

You should try harder, sheriff.

She cups her hand in the water, bringing it to her lips for a drink. Hicks smiles, leaning forward, something on his mind.

HICKS

You ever regret it? Bein' a Priest?

PRIESTESS

No.

HICKS

What about a husband, children...A family?

PRIESTESS

I've had a family -- just not the kind you're familiar with.

Hicks glances at Priest.

HICKS

What? You mean Mr. Laffs over there?

PRIESTESS

He's not so bad once you get to know him.

A beat, Hick's expression becoming serious.

HICKS

He's going to kill her, isn't he? If she's turned.

PRIESTESS

Yes.

HICKS

There's things that can be done. She doesn't have to die.

PRIESTESS

She's his bloodline...and he's a Priest. It's the only way.

Hicks tosses the rest of his food into the fire, troubled, but he knows there's no point in discussing it any further...for now.

HICKS

And how many of you Priests are left now?

A long moment before she speaks.

PRIESTESS

Two.

Hicks doesn't know what to say.

HICKS

...I'm sorry.

PRIESTESS

Yes.

She nods, though in affirmation of what Hicks's isn't sure. He watches her as she stares into the fire. We FADE TO BLACK.

INT. VAMPIRE HIVE - DREAM SEQUENCE/FLASHBACK

It's dark.

A GROUP OF PRIESTS (OUR TWO amongst them) move silently through a DEEP TRENCH, moist earthen walls rising around them, the air putrid with stink, mud clinging to their feet.

Last in the line, is a particularly FEARSOME PRIEST...unlike the others, he's smiling, enjoying the action.

As a cohesive unit, the Priests, climb up from the trench, scaling through the muck. They find themselves at the base of the hive, looking around at a chilling sight --

THOUSANDS OF HONEYCOMBS

stretching endlessly, rising high above in a cone. THOUSANDS OF SLEEPING VAMPIRES.

OUR PRIEST, motions with his hand to the others, giving precise instructions, their movements well coordinated.

He stops. Hearing a sound...a faint buzzing.

A BEAT as the Priestess looks at the others.

PRIESTESS
They know we're here.

From under the earth A HAND SHOOTS UP, grabbing onto a Priest's leg, pulling him down. Suddenly DOZENS OF VAMPIRES emerge, seemingly birthed from the soil. The warriors fight valiantly. Fiercely. But it's too much. Most are quickly cut down.

PRIEST
Retreat!

FEARSOME PRIEST

Battles like a tiger, grappling with TWO VAMPIRES, their claws at his throat, fangs inches from his face. A couple of quick moves and - before you realize how - the vampires lay dead.

He quickly joins the surviving Priests as they run through the hive, a dizzying maze of MUDDY TUNNELS AND TRENCHES.

FEARSOME SUDDENLY STOPS

A BLACK TOP HAT lying on the ground catching his eye, must be the last remnant of a dandy gentleman. He picks it up, admiring the souvenir. Puts it on his head.

The Priestess races by, shooting him a "we don't have time for this" look. He STOPS her, grabbing her shoulder

FEARSOME PRIEST

(winks)

What do you think -- Am I a "Dapper Dan"?

She glares, running ahead to join the group. Fearsome just smiles, taking off the hat.

FEARSOME PRIEST (CONT'D)

Guess not.

From within the hive comes a MIGHTY SHRIEK -- and now Fearsome starts to run, trying to catch the others as they scramble for daylight. The exit just in sight.

At the last second --

He's pulled back by a clutch of SCREECHING HUNGRY CLAWS. The hat still gripped tightly in his hand as he's dragged away.

Our two Priests reach for him but it's too late...He disappears into the darkness as we CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BEGGAR'S PASS CAMP - NIGHT

Priest WAKING UP, breath catching in his throat.

He looks over to find the Priestess working on her cycle, unable to sleep. There's a tension in the air, the sense of something about to break as he joins her.

PRIESTESS

Why would the Clergy forbid us from seeing each other?

PRIEST

Maybe they were scared of what we could do.

PRIESTESS

Or what we would do.

(pause)

We both know there's something inside the Order that's off. Even if we don't know what it is.

PRIEST

With or without the Clergy...we're still Priests. And we're the only ones who can stop that train.

PRIESTESS

If we survive this we need to expose them for what they are.

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PRIEST
(pause)
We won't survive this.

She puts down her tools, staring fixedly at him.

PRIESTESS
You scared to die?

PRIEST
No.

PRIESTESS
I believed in Heaven my whole life.
Believed everything we were taught -- And
now...when it's finally my time...no more
faith. They took it away from me.

Priest gazes at her, trying his best to be comforting.

PRIEST
Whatever happens...Wherever it is we go.
We'll go together.

At that exact moment something inside Priest shifts just a
little bit, a door opens -- never to be shut again.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
What is greater than God but more evil
than the Devil? The poor have it, the
rich need it -- and if you eat
it...you'll die.

PRIESTESS
What?

PRIEST
It's a riddle.

The Priestess thinks about it.

PRIESTESS
Nothing. That's the answer.
(beat)
Nothing is greater than God. Nothing is
more evil than the devil. The poor have
nothing, the rich need nothing. And if
you eat nothing...you'll die.

It's said that warriors can become close friends only when they
see each other's hearts -- Priest now knows this to be true.

PRIEST
What you said before...about those nights
when you were dreaming of me --

PRIESTESS
The good nights.

PRIEST
Yes. The good nights. Do you think
maybe tonight...

PRIESTESS
Could be one of those nights?

She smiles.

And then Priest does the most amazing thing...he smiles back.

Things happen fast -- He finds himself planting his mouth on
hers...the years of conditioning, all the ritual and
tradition falling away in a flash.

And it is here, together in this place, where they feel like
they finally truly belong.

The last two.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEGGAR'S PASS - DAWN

A blanket of mist covers everything in a grey haze. Morning
has come.

A QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS

As our trio forges onward and upward, the trail more
treacherous with every twisty ridge, the overhangs looming
ominously as they head deeper into the mountain.

EXT. BEGGAR'S PASS - LATER

The final climb.

Yawning crevices, the wind moaning as it whistles between the
canyon walls.

Carefully they ride across DEVIL'S BRIDGE, a finger of stone,
just wide enough for the cycles, on either side a straight
drop to oblivion. The peak of the mountain just ahead.

The Priestess is in front leading the charge, closely followed by Hicks. Priest brings up the rear, he stops just past the bridge, looks around.

Something's wrong.

HICKS

I see it!

Hicks points, reaching the top of the mountain.

IN THE DISTANCE

A long black line snakes along the rail, puffs of heavy smoke lining its path: The Night Train.

They're ahead of it. Barely.

In his excitement, Hicks thunders ahead, starting the descent down the other side. The Priestess turns to shout back to Priest.

But he's gone.

Off her reaction we CUT TO:

EXT. CREVASSE - DAY

Tall rock walls flank Priest on either side, the surrounding mist hanging in the air in cloudlike wisps. Slowly he walks through the canyon, senses fully attuned. It's quiet.

PRIEST

I know you're there.

A slight sound, the mist whipping into a pool as if something just moved through it. Priest quickly turns but there's nothing there.

A GROUP OF ROCKS

Tumble down the cliff. Again Priest abruptly turns but...still nothing there.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Show yourself.

A BEAT as he stands in the ether, waiting. Then --

WHOOSH! A CHAIN cuts through the mist. METAL CLAW SNAPPING open, heading straight for Priest.

Just in time -- he DIVES, the claw BITING into a rock behind him, the chain quickly snapping back, disappearing into the fog.

RUNE (O.S.)
(voice like the mist itself)
I've waited a long time for this Priest.

PRIEST
This isn't the time to settle old scores,
Rune.

RUNE (O.S.)
I disagree...This is the perfect time.

WOOSH! Like lightning, the claw LASHES out, appearing from nowhere. Priest JUMPS and it CHOMPS into the ground where he was standing. He lands on top of the chain, backflipping as it retracts back. Gearing up for another attack.

RUNE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You've lost a step Priest...I never came this close before.

PRIEST
I'm older now.

We can almost hear Rune smile.

RUNE (O.S.)
Not me.

And now THE CHAIN comes from a different direction, WRAPPING around Priest like a snake, the metal cutting into his body, snapping a rib!

Yelling, Priest GRABS the chain, PULLING with everything he's got. Rune flies from the mist, dragged by Priest, crashing at his feet. The chain SNAPS and Priest BREAKS from the coils, grabbing Rune by the jacket, picking him up.

Rune flashes his fangs and scissors his legs across Priest's stomach, the razor sharp roweled SPURS slicing his flesh, tearing the muscle, Priest SCREAMS, a hot rush of blood staining the desert floor.

Rune leaps away, landing ontop a boulder.

RUNE (CONT'D)
You can't outrun the past, Priest...the things you did.

PRIEST
It was a war, Rune.

RUNE
It still is.

He launches at Priest, duster fluttering like wings. The two grapple, Rune's fangs brushing Priest's neck.

It's a savage battle, Priest's muscles and laser-like focus the only thing keeping him alive as Rune flies back across the canyon, landing against the rock wall like a spider. Hunched, ready to strike BUT --

THE PRIESTESS

Appears from within the mist, already in mid-leap, she lands beside Priest. The two together, a formidable presence.

But Rune's a tough customer, he readies himself for another attack.

Through the mist a single CLICKING sound.

Rune looks over, sees --

HICKS

Six-shooter pointed right at him.

A beat as the two sides stare at each other in standoff. The air between them vibrating with energy. Crackling. Rune considering his options.

RUNE (CONT'D)
. (hissing)
Another time, Priest.

He skitters up the rock face, disappearing into the mist.

BAM!

Hicks fires a single shot, the echo ringing through the canyon.

RUNE'S BODY

Drops from the fog, hitting the ground with a thud. Dead.

And now Hicks turns -- points his revolver at Priest. Catching both he and the Priestess by surprise.

HICKS
Tell me you won't kill her.

Priest doesn't reply.

HICKS (CONT'D)
Tell me...or I'll shoot you where you stand.

PRIEST
Finally showing your true colors.

A beat. The Priestess looks at Hicks.

PRIESTESS
What's he talking about?

PRIEST
He's a halfbreed.

Hicks cocks the gun.

HICKS
Don't turn this into somethin' it's not.

PRIEST
You've been itching to do this since
Nightshade.

HICKS
She's your kin, goddamit!

PRIEST
If she's turned...she's nobody's kin.

HICKS
Things can be done. Things to lessen the
thirst. She can have a normal life, she
doesn't have to die.

Priest nods grimly.

PRIEST
It's our way.

HICKS
And what is that? Some special Priest
code of honor? You don't get it. Your
"way" -- It's over!

PRIEST
Shoot me and it won't matter if you find
Lucy. You won't stop that train -- and
you won't save her.

The Priestess steps between them, looks at Hicks.

PRIESTESS

He's right. We need to be together on this...it's the only shot we have.

Hicks thinks about it, knows she's right. A tense beat then --

HICKS

This ain't done.

He lowers his gun and walks away.

The two warriors stand together, the Priestess gazing at Priest...he doesn't return it.

Without a word, he heads back to his cycle.

She doesn't see as his hand touches his stomach.

It comes up red.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEGGAR'S PASS - DAY

The Trio BLAST down the rock face, descending down the mountain at a furious clip. The Priestess looks at the train off in the distance, it's now much closer, passing the mountain.

They've lost their edge.

HICKS

C'mon!

He GUNS the throttle and his bike BLAZES forward, wheels thundering across the earth, the ROAR of engines filling our head becoming --

EXT. DUNKIRK RAIL - SAME TIME

The mad CLATTER of the train as it barrels down the tracks.

EXT. BEGGAR'S PASS - DAY

The assault begins.

Our trio finishes their descent, BLASTING onto the

SALT FLATS

wheels kicking up sheets of sand and grit, spattering their faces. The train dead in their sites.

HICKS
(shouting)
You think they see us?

As if in response the locomotive belches a thick cloud of black smoke, a door sliding open from one of the cars.

A BEAT as everyone holds their breath, wondering what's going to emerge --

VR000000000000!

SIX BLACK MOTORCYCLES (the same ones who kidnapped Lucy) fly out from within the car! Vampires covered in rider leather, protected from the sun, heads obscured by BLAST HELMETS.

Priest turns to the other two.

PRIEST
Make sure you get on that train.
(beat)
I'll catch up.

Before they can respond, he banks his cycle to the left.

THE VAMPIRE RIDERS

Take the bait, going for Priest. They gun their cycles, engines WHINING as they rev forward, their LEADER unleashing a chain, swirling it above his head.

With a SNAP he lashes it at Priest, the chain catching in his wheel, the sound of metal grinding as

PRIEST

Is thrown! His beloved bike FLIPPING across the desert in wild arcs. He hits the earth with a painful skid, using the momentum to roll back onto his feet.

He checks his stomach, the wound's opening up more, staining his shirt bright red. No time for first aid as he turns just in time to see --

TWO RIDERS

Throwing a STEEL CHAIN to the other, pulling the line taut, ready to take him out. Approaching fast.

PRIEST

At the last second, DUCKS, grabbing onto the chain, swinging himself around in a graceful arc and KICKING his legs into a split. WHAM! his feet SLAM the two cyclists off their bikes and into the dirt.

He lands back on the ground in a crouch, the steel chain tight in his grip -- Ready for battle.

And he gets it.

THE OTHER FOUR RIDERS

Circle Priest, surrounding him, the ROAR of their engines like massive power drills.

PRIEST

Snaps the chain above his head, bullwhip style, LASHING out. The sound of metal shredding as it tangles in Rider #1's handlebars, the bike SWEEPING into the other, CRASHING in a tangled mess.

With a SNARL the fallen riders LAUNCH at Priest. These vampires are different than the Nightshade tribe. Stronger, quicker. Squat bodies of clenched muscles and fangs.

A BRUTAL FIGHT

Spinning, twisting, kicking, gnashing. Bodies locked in deep combat as Priest fends off the ferocious attackers. War cries WHOOPING, the OTHERS TWO RIDERS continue to circle the gladiators, dust kicking from their wheels.

PRIEST

Rips the BLAST HELMETS off his two attackers. With a SCREECH, their faces burn, bodies instantly BLACKENING in the harsh sun.

Priest CRUNCHES a vampire in the ribs, knocking the creature off his bike. In a flash, he FLINGS a helmet into the housing of the last cycle, the bike nosedives, sending the rider across the desert.

Eyes brimming with renewed fury, Priest picks up the cycle, VR000OM!! GUNNING the throttle, hard. ROCKETING towards the train...

EXT. VAMPIRE TRAIN - SAME TIME

Hicks and the Priestess are riding right beside the colossus, the sound incredible as the cars rattle across the tracks. Carefully, they pull up to the caboose.

PRIESTESS
(shouting to be heard)
You ready?

Hicks nods, maneuvering to the side of his bike and jumping to the Priestess's, his cycle crashing into the dirt as he LEAPS onto the back of the train.

PRIESTESS (CONT'D)
I'm going for the engine. Find Lucy.
(about to speed off, stops)
Before he does.

Hicks nods, knowing this'll probably be the last time he sees her.

And with that, she throttles forward, disappearing.

Alone, Hicks takes a deep breath, looks at --

THE TRAIN CAR DOOR

Who knows what horrors lie behind it? He pops a WAD OF ATOMIC CHAW in his mouth and pulls his six shooters.

HICKS
My turn now, Priest.

BAM! He kicks the door in --

INT. VAMPIRE TRAIN CAR - SAME

Sunlight bursts into the darkened chamber, but only reaching so far, as if the sun itself were scared to enter.

Hicks rolls in, guns at the ready. It takes a moment for his eyes to adjust but when they do he finds a series of OLD WOODEN COFFINS stacked atop one another like cargo.

He quickly moves through the car, careful not to disturb anything. We FOLLOW with him as he exits, entering --

INT. BLACK STEEL ENCLOSURE - CONTINUOUS

Designed so one can move between the cars without exposure to the sun, making the train a world of eternal midnight.

Carefully, Hicks opens the next compartment's door...

INT. TRAIN CAR - CONTINUOUS

It's pitch black.

The only thing we can make out is a LARGE CAGE, what's inside impossible to see in the darkness, just a GIANT HULKING SHADOW. Its steady, hefty breathing letting us know whatever it is, it's asleep.

Hicks covers his nose from the bestial smell, the cage taking up so much room he is forced to press himself against the bars, his body just inches from the thing inside.

THE TWITCH OF BLACK LEATHER WINGS

Makes Hicks stop in his tracks, silently praying to whoever's listening.

A long moment...and then the steady breathing begins again.

Whew. Hicks continues through the cabin, finally making it to the door as --

EXT. VAMPIRE TRAIN - DAY

The Priestess, engine at full boil, makes her way up the train, eyes on the engine up ahead.

ACROSS THE BODY OF THE TRAIN

A long line of tiny SLATS open up, RIFLE BARRELS quickly emerging, snapping into place with a click. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! The guns FIRE AWAY, bullets blasting all around the Priestess, missing her by millimeters.

She flicks down a TOGGLE SWITCH, there's a mighty roar, a massive surge of power and WHOOSH! she ROCKETS forward. The bullets chewing up the dirt behind her!

PRIEST

Seemingly from out of nowhere, motors up to the train car riding the vampire cycle. He grabs onto a gun barrel and SWINGS into an arc, lifting himself off the bike and --

EXT. TRAIN ROOF - SAME TIME

Lands on the roof of the train. Hard.

EXT. BELOW THE TRAIN - SAME TIME

The cycle quickly ripped apart as it falls under the juggernaut, getting crushed, sparks flying off the rails.

EXT. TRAIN ROOF - SAME TIME

Priest collapses against the metal, the strain beginning to wear, he blinks up at the sky, close to passing out.

Suddenly a FIGURE steps in front of him, blotting out the sun. Priest squints, unable to trust his eyes, he must be hallucinating --

IT'S BLACK HAT. He looks down at Priest, bowing with a slight flourish.

BLACK HAT
"And the third day He shall rise again."

Priest can't believe it, seeing his long dead comrade, his face etched with shock, all he can do is ask --

PRIEST
...How?

Black Hat smiles, baring his fangs.

BLACK HAT
Oh ye of little faith.

The understanding hits Priest immediately, crashing over him like a wave.

PRIEST
...They turned you.

BLACK HAT
No, Priest...I turned them.

He smiles wider as we CROSSTHROUGH TO:

INT. VAMPIRE TRAIN - SAME TIME

Hicks still hunting for Lucy, making his way to the next car.

He slides open the door, stepping carefully inside, candlelight softly illuminating the space.

He's greeted by a sight that makes his blood freeze:

DOZENS OF OPEN COFFINS FILL THE CAR

Long black boxes lined in orderly rows, flickering light bouncing warmly off their mahogany casings -- The sound of DEEP TORTURED BREATHING lets us know the OCCUPANTS are asleep.

HICKS
(under his breath)
Shit.

Gritting his teeth, he walks between the rows, quiet as possible. The interiors of the coffins are dark, hard to see what's lying inside, just that horrible breathing sound.

As Hicks moves past, his body brushes the wood, the space so very tight.

WHAM! The train CATCHES the rail and the car shakes, KNOCKING HIM INTO A COFFIN! Jarring it.

He stops. Holding his breath...but

Nothing happens.

A quick Hail Mary (the man becoming more of a convert with every step) and he continues on.

He doesn't notice as, behind him, a FIGURE rises from one of the coffins...

CROSSCUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN ROOF - SAME TIME

Priest and Black Hat eye each other, landscape whipping past at a furious rate, the train blasting along the tracks.

BLACK HAT
Lost souls abandoned by divinity. No belief, no voice to guide them through the wilderness. Sound familiar?

Priest doesn't reply, warily eyeing him.

BLACK HAT (CONT'D)
Lack of faith. That's what I found in my new brethren -- And so it was I discovered my true calling -- To teach. To lead.

PRIEST
By murdering innocents?

BLACK HAT
By drawing a once great race back to their nature. By helping them discover the mastery within themselves.

(beat)

(MORE)

BLACK HAT (CONT'D)
By putting them in touch with a higher power.

PRIEST

Who?

BLACK HAT
Me.

Something in the distance catches Priest's eye, a BLACK SPEC on the horizon -- It's The Cities. His jaw tightens, he knows there isn't much time.

PRIEST
So this is how you go about it? One by one killing every last remaining Priest?

BLACK HAT
It was the only way. The Cities are defenseless now...no one left to stop us from entering our Eden. But I was kind -- I gave every last one the choice I never had.

(smiles)
Now it's your turn.

Almost imperceptibly the two make a shift in their postures, the tension between the two warming up. Two warriors steeling for a fight.

BLACK HAT (CONT'D)
It's better to be with your enemies than to be alone, Priest. Humanity had its chance.

(beat)
It's time to make way for new blood.

Priest lowers his head, when he raises it, his reply comes easy and without hesitation.

PRIEST
Yours.

WE HEAR A HUM

Molecules and electrons bursting from their orbits, the roar of the train gently subsiding as if the universe itself wants to leave these two room to battle.

And before anyone knows it, they're already mid-fight. The SLAM and COLLISION of bodies giving way to the graceful sweep and echo of Priest combat.

No more physics -- Just blood and fury.

Then as combustibly fast as it started -- the tableau drops. They stand, wind whipping around them in lethal currents, Black Hat having to shout to be heard.

BLACK HAT

They taught us God created man in His image...but they lied. Man created God in his image -- And so, like man, God is weak. Corrupt. Merciless.

He wipes away a streak of blood from his cheek.

BLACK HAT (CONT'D)

Who do you fight for, Priest? The Order's collapsed. The Church nothing but a line of decrepit, ruined old men. Charlatans.

(smiles)

How do you think I'm getting into the Cities?

Priest's face drops.

PRIEST

I don't believe you.

BLACK HAT

Your faith has failed you Priest.

(beat)

Join me. Join me and have the best of both worlds -- Walk in the sun. Stalk in the night. Why pray to a God when you can BE one?

PRIEST

Never.

With ferocious instinct, he launches forward, feet digging into the metal.

The two bodies COLLIDE with epic impact. Rolling across the roof, bodies twisting to the edge before FLIPPING onto the next car.

The warriors rise, locked in a furious coil as WHOOSH! train car after train car passes beneath them. Each leaping at just the right moment to land onto the next.

But Priest is outmatched.

As they hit the final car, Priest flies across the roof catching the edge with his hand just before he goes over, his body dangling over the side. Exhausted and bloodied.

Black Hat calmly approaches, his foot dangerously close to Priest's hand. The landscape below whipping past at an incredible speed.

BLACK HAT

Your problem is you keep looking to God for your power -- But I know the real truth.

(beat)

You've been praying to an empty sky.

And now he SWIPES his foot across the roof, knocking off Priest's hand as one would swat a bug. Priest falls below, getting caught under the train and quickly dragged under.

BLACK HAT (CONT'D)

But you know that now.

CROSSCUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN - SAME TIME

The Priestess, cycle at full throttle, racing beside the TRAIN ENGINE. Up close it's a real mechanical monster, black metal and heat fused into a superpowered nightmare. The hull completely covered. Impervious.

MASSIVE PISTONS

Pump up and down furiously, moving so fast they blur, turning the giant DRIVE WHEELS that power the locomotive. ANGRY BLASTS OF STEAM vent white hot from between the wheels, just missing the Priestess.

She reaches into her pack and lugs out a CROWBAR, pulling up to the beast and managing to stick it between the pistons hoping to jam up the works.

The machine chews it up like candy.

CROSSCUT TO:

INT. TRAIN COFFIN CAR - SAME TIME

Hicks is almost at the door, hand reaching for the handle. He hears a RUSTLING sound and turns to look behind him...

But there's nothing, just the open coffins.

Turning back, Hicks catches his breath:

A VAMPIRE hangs upside down from the ceiling, blocking the door. Its red eyes snap in anticipation, a shiny BLACK PROBOSCIS darting from its mouth!

Hicks SPITS a wad of ATOMIC CHAW at the creature. It SHRIEKS! dropping to the floor, writhing. The sick smell of cooked flesh filling the car.

HICKS LOOKS BEHIND HIM

DOZENS OF VAMPIRES ARE NOW AWAKE. Sitting up in their coffins, the foul creatures all blood-eyeing Hicks like the dinner he most surely is.

HICKS

Shit.

With a WAIL, the vampires quickly scramble from their coffins, sharp talons scratching at the wood, snapping the planks.

Desperate, he wrenches open the door, darting into --

INT. STEEL ENCLOSURE - CONTINUOUS

and manages to SLAM the door behind him just in time as the hungry beings CRASH against it!

He wedges a knife in the door handle, bashing it with his revolver, jamming the door trapped shut.

He turns to head to the next car but there's a THICK CHAIN AND PADLOCK wrapped around the door, a WILD-EYED FAMILIAR peering out from inside the door window. Hicks SHOOTS the padlock but no luck, it doesn't break.

He's trapped.

THE DOOR BEHIND HICKS BUCKLES ON ITS HINGES

It'll hold...but not for long.

EXT. UNDERNEATH THE TRAIN - SAME TIME

Priest is still alive. Barely.

He hangs in tatters, desperately clinging to the undercarriage, face and body punched with bruises and blood.

Jaw set, he begins to move through the undercarriage, hand over hand, every movement sheer agony.

INT. METAL ENCLOSURE - SAME TIME

Hicks stares at the door as it starts to BREAK from its hinges. He trains his gun on it, a feeble gesture -- but it's all he's got left.

Then there's a horrible SCREECH.

HICKS TURNS

The WILD-EYED FAMILIAR charges, attacking from behind, having unlocked the chain and opened the door. He SCREAMS, sinking a KNIFE in Hicks' side!

Hicks spins, slamming his attacker in the nose with a palm heel strike, knocking the Familiar out instantly.

Hicks pulls the knife out, blood flowering across his shirt as the vampires continue to PUMMEL the door behind him.

He trips over the chain and staggers into --

INT. ASSEMBLY CAR - CONTINUOUS

Collapsing to the floor, he presses his body against the door to close it.

HIS EYES SEARCH THE CAR

It's bare. Absolutely nothing in here. A single candle burns on the floor, dimly illuminating the room.

Weakly, he crosses the space and goes to the next door. This one's got a THICK PADLOCK too.

HICKS

'Damn.

He sits on the floor, breathing hard, knowing this is as far as he goes.

Gradually another sound becomes audible. Hicks listens, nervous. He holds his breath straining to hear.

It's someone else's BREATHING.

IN THE CORNER

A HUNCHEDE FIGURE sits...its back to him. Hidden in shadow. Hicks levels his gun, slowly moving towards the shape, the candlelight giving him a glimpse of its face.

He can hardly believe it --

HICKS (CONT'D)

Lucy?

It is.

That's when he sees something. Glinting in the darkness, just below her lip.

Something sharp.

CUT TO:

EXT. VAMPIRE TRAIN - SAME TIME

THE STEAM WHISTLE BLASTS

Howling across the wasteland, the train now racing even faster, furnace cranking out flame like Dante's Inferno, the Priestess furiously keeping pace with the engine, desperately looking for a way in.

There is none.

She looks up ahead.

THE SKYLINE OF THE CITIES

Smudged like a greasestain, looms large across the horizon, right in the train's path.

She squints up to the sky, analyzing the sun, making a quick series of calculations in her head. Trajectory. Timing.

Then she looks at the train. Smiles.

She flicks the Nitros Toggle one last time. Her bike ROCKETS past the train engine, speeding into a curtain of dust. Disappearing...

INT. ASSEMBLY CAR - SAME TIME

Hicks crouches beside Lucy, his gun trained on her.

She sits listlessly, her skin pale, eyes lost on the wall in front of her.

HICKS

Lucy, my name is Sheriff Hicks... I'm here to take you home.

No response. She seems almost catatonic. He reaches into his pocket, pulling out her photograph, showing it to her.

HICKS (CONT'D)
I'm here with your uncle.

That gets her attention, she looks at Hicks -- And she looks scared.

WHAP!!

The car door outside finally starts to give freely, metal breaking open. The sound of SQUEALING vampires.

Hicks runs to the car door, in one quick motion, SCOOPING up the chain and WRAPPING it around the handle, TYING IT TIGHT just as --

A TALON

Reaches through the opening, long bony fingers swiping at Hicks like switchblades as he falls backwards, pain shooting up his body.

ANOTHER ARM breaks through the small window, clawing at the air, the door BANGING REPEATEDLY against the chain.

Hicks places himself between Lucy and the door, not noticing as she eyes the blood soaking through his shirt.

HICKS (CONT'D)
Stay behind me. I'll hold 'em off as long as I can

BLAM! BLAM! Hicks FIRES, bullets peppering the creatures as they HOWL -- but they keep at it, the thick chain stretched tight, ready to snap.

ONE VAMPIRE

Manages to scramble through, it charges at Hicks, fangs glistening. BAM! With a twitch, it collapses in a heap, a well placed bullet between the eyes.

EXT. THE CITIES - SAME TIME

A MASSIVE GATE, not opened for decades slowly GRINDS open, a complex series of CHAINS and WINCHES scraping to life. The Cities now open to the approaching vampire train.

EXT. TRAIN - SAME TIME

The SCREAM of the whistle like victory as the locomotive approaches the city limits, sending up a giant plume of billowing steam.

The sky above already starting to cloud black as --

INT. ASSEMBLY CAR - SAME TIME

Hicks continues to FIRE, the vampires seconds from entering the car.

He turns to look back at Lucy. But she's gone.

HICKS

Lucy?

WHAM! A WOODEN PLANK slams him over the head, knocking the gun from his hand. Woozy, he spins around to find Lucy standing over him, holding the plank above her head.

He scoots back just as WHAM! the plank comes back down again, splintering apart across the floor.

HICKS (CONT'D)

Lucy, wait --

She doesn't, jabbing at him with the broken plank, he dodges it, barely, but she keeps coming.

HICKS (CONT'D)

Lucy, don't do this!

The girl's just too fast. She keeps pushing him backwards until he's dangerously close to the vampire's clawing hands.

Hicks closes his eyes, knowing this is it...

A FIST

PUNCHES through a BOARDED UP HOLE in the floor (the one through which Lucy escaped before), wood splintering into tiny shards.

Hicks takes advantage of the distraction and SLUGS Lucy, knocking her unconscious.

He dives for his gun, scooping it up and leveling it at the hole, ready to fire at whatever's coming through...

IT'S PRIEST

He sticks his head through the opening, having been drawn by the sound of gunfire. Hicks can't believe it.

PRIEST

(reaching for Lucy)

Give her to me! Hurry!

Hicks thinks about it, unsure.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

-- They'll get through the door any second! Give her to me!

Screeching, ANOTHER VAMPIRE makes it through the opening, Hicks quickly taking him down in one crack shot.

He picks Lucy up, handing her to Priest.

Priest disappears with her, Hicks climbing down behind just as -- the chain finally SNAPS and the door BURSTS open with screeching vampires!

Hicks BLASTS away but there's too many of them, they keep coming. He drops into the hole --

EXT. UNDERNEATH THE TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Landing in the undercarriage. Coming face to face with the speeding track, everything shaking like an earthquake.

A VAMPIRE

Jabs its head through the hole, teeth chattering -- but the creature can't go any further, the sunlight already making its skin smoke.

On his back, Hicks worms his way down, following Priest as they climb up a LADDER attached to the side of the train.

EXT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

They work their way up the side, making it to the roof, exhausted. Priest carrying the still unconscious Lucy.

HICKS

We should jump!

PRIEST

Not until we stop the train!

But now Hicks isn't even looking at him, his attention caught up in the horrible sight waiting ahead of them.

HICKS

(swallows)

Too late.

THE CITYSCAPE

Towers above as the train approaches, so close the smell of sulphur and carbon clogs their noses.

But that's when something catches Hicks' eye...up ahead on the tracks --

Someone stands awaiting the train.

IT'S THE PRIESTESS -- Standing defiant as the train barrels towards her. An ant in front of a battleship.

She sees Hicks and Priest on top of the train, Lucy with them.

Taking one last look at Priest -- she smiles.

And spreads her arms open.

ON PRIEST

Horrified, realizing what she's going to do...and powerless to stop her.

PRIEST

No.

What happens next happens fast:

Priest GRABS Hicks, folding his body around both he and Lucy, hands coming together in prayer, feet leaving the train as --

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK

The sound of a heartbeat. A threshold. A zone of transition.

A BRIGHT FLASH -- we see the TRAIN collide with the Priestess. The massive grill of the engine CRUMPLING AROUND HER as if smashing into a building.

She doesn't move.

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK

A BRIGHT FLASH -- one by one the train cars SLAM into each other, the cars JUMPING the rails.

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK

A BRIGHT FLASH -- and now Priest is falling through the air, his body shielding Hicks and Lucy, train cars skipping across the earth, careening through the air.

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK

6
And WHAM! we FUSE back into real time as train cars CRASH down, sheets of dust clouding the sky in a roiling storm of debris and shrapnel, until finally...it all comes to a stop.

It's quiet.

We move through the swirling sand until we find --

PRIEST

He stands, bruised and bloody, staring at the sky. Watching. A dazed Hicks beside him, Lucy in his arms as she comes to.

A HORRENDOUS SCREECH fills the air.

Led by the Purebloods, HUNDREDS OF VAMPIRES fly out from within the broken cars, taking to the sky in a massive black swarm, tangling together in flowing shapes. Beautiful. Terrifying.

Then in one horrible instant --

They TURN as if guided by an unseen hand, flying towards the Cities. Sensing the blood that awaits.

HICKS
(horrified)
They're gonna make it.

The creatures arc towards the metropolis, the city within their reach.

Priest studies the sky and all at once...he knows.

PRIEST
No, they're not.

THE SUN

PUNCHES through the teeming mass.

A few rays at first, but then more and more, cracking through the black tide like shattered glass.

Hicks' eyes widen, witnessing an amazing sight as the vampires' bodies collectively BLACKEN and SHRIVEL the swarm withering...quickly becoming nothing more than husks. Floating black kites.

Hicks and Priest stand, surrounded by the epic destruction, fire and smoke casting everything in a surreal haze.

HICKS
You knew they wouldn't make it.

A long time before Priest answers.

PRIEST
She knew.

He turns to THE ENGINE -- its grinning teeth grill CAVED IN as if smashed by the very hand of God.

THE PRIESTESS

Lies before it. Somehow not a scratch on her...But something's wrong -- something inside her broken, something elemental. She doesn't have much time.

Priest kneels beside her, taking her hand. Trying to be strong for her.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Do you want me to?

PRIESTESS
...Yes.

Priest lowers his head. The following having been spoken by him all too often.

PRIEST
"You shall wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit..."

The words are heavy, each harder than the next.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
-- As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end."
(beat)
Amen.

IN THE DISTANCE

A FIGURE escapes through the dust, lurching towards the Cities -- It's Black Hat.

PRIEST

sees him but chooses to stay with the Priestess, brushing the hair from her face.

PRIESTESS
I wish we could've had more time.

PRIEST
...Me too.

She reaches up, placing her hand on his chest.

PRIESTESS
Wherever it is we go -- we go together,
right?

She smiles weakly...but Priest can see she's scared.

He gives her one last kiss, cradling her body, sand circling
them as she draws her final breath.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WASTELAND - DUSK

The sun setting on the horizon.

A nearby PYRE consumes the last of the Priestess' body as Priest
saddles up on a vampire bike, the flames rising behind him.

Hicks approaches, Lucy huddled in a blanket, shivering.

The two men exchange a look, the snap and flash of the fire
reflecting in their eyes.

HICKS
When you're finished -- You know where to
find me.

A tense beat then --

Priest GUNS the engine. Hicks and Lucy watching as he blazes
towards the Cities, the sky above the color of hellfire.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITIES - NIGHT

The sound of a CHOIR.

The soaring, ethereal tones carrying us through the forest of
BRICK SMOKESTACKS -- finally coming to rest on A GIANT CROSS
atop a mosaic BASILLICA, the colored tiles black with ash.

We're back in CLERGY CITY.

INT. CLERGY CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Evening mass. The place is packed, every pew filled with WORSHIPERS.

CROSSCUT TO:

INT. CLERGY CHAMBER - SAME

Shadows and light.

A cabal of MONSIGNORS stand shrouded in white robes, awaiting to be anointed by ORELAS. A private ceremony.

CROSSCUT TO:

INT. CATHEDRAL - SAME

A LINE OF CHILDREN kneel before the altar, the MONSIGNOR raising the Host, offering communion.

He suddenly stops, his expression dropping as

PRIEST

Slowly makes his way down the aisle, bruised and bloodied, his very presence a direct affront to this place. A woman GASPS, somebody faints.

CROSSCUT TO:

INT. CHAMBER - SAME

Orelas dips his hand in water, touching a Monsignor's forehead.

ORELAS

Ecce Agnes Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.

THERE'S A LOUD CRASH

Everyone turns to see the massive chamber doors BURSTING inwards! THE BODIES OF TWO GUARDS skidding across the marble floor.

PRIEST ENTERS THE CHAMBER

A true force of nature now, coming like the Fourth Horseman. Grief and betrayal stoking his anger higher, a blaze igniting behind his eyes.

BLACK HAT

Steps from the shadows. Deep wounds line his face, the cross tattoo now gouged and distorted with blood -- He smiles.

BLACK HAT
I'm afraid you're too late, Priest.

THE MONSIGNORS

Shed their robes, revealing fresh BITE MARKS on their necks. Orelas' new-found fangs glint in the candlelight.

ORELAS
And why shouldn't we live forever?
(hisses)
We're God's very voice. His vessel!

PRIEST

Stands shell shocked, the level of betrayal staggering.

BLACK HAT ATTACKS

SLAMMING into him, the two warriors going at it in a brutal battle, the vampire raking his claws across Priest's face, drawing blood.

PRIEST

Sends him sailing through the air, Black Hat crashing into a collection of CANDLE HOLDERS, an ancient TAPESTRY catching fire, flames quickly spreading to the other fabrics -- The chamber erupting in an orange blaze!

THE MONSIGNORS SHRIEK

Bodies contorting in grotesque shapes as they BECOME.

Black Hat stands triumphant, flames rising behind him.

BLACK HAT
With them I can start anew! You can't
stop it --
(smiles)
Must be God's will.

He flies across the room, BARRELING into Priest with everything he's got, DIGGING a hand into Priest's wound.

BLACK HAT (CONT'D)
"I looked and beheld a pale horse and His
name that sat on him was Death" --

Priest coughs up blood. Black Hat smiles, wrapping a hand around Priest's throat, LIFTING him off the floor, SQUEEZING the life from him.

BLACK HAT (CONT'D)
"And all hell followed with him."

He raises his head back, ready to sink his teeth. Priest too exhausted to fight back. This is it.

From above --

THE GIANT GOLD CROSS

Breaks from the wall with a GROAN, PLUMMETING towards them.

Black Hat stops, his eyes snapping upward.

At the last second --

PRIEST

WRENCHES himself from Black Hat's grip, tumbling across the floor.

WHAP! The cross SLAMS onto Black Hat, pulverizing him!

Chunks of glass and stone rain down around Priest, the chamber starting to COLLAPSE. Diving, he barely makes it out, the rotunda CRASHING down behind him.

The Monsignors lunge but Priest manages to jam the doors shut, locking them in. They BASH against the door, SHRIEKING horribly, the chamber now an oven.

Priest presses against the door, it SPLINTERS all around him, the terrible sound RISING until finally --

It stops.

PRIEST
(whispers)
Forgive me.

He collapses, making the sign of the cross.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLERGY CATHEDRAL - MOMENTS LATER

Complete chaos.

PEOPLE stream out of the massive doorway, stampeding down the stairs, the giant structure enveloped in smoke and flame.

Priest looks up to find FATHER KOEPHEN. The old man staring at him. A lost soul.

KOEPHEN

Am I next?

Priest approaches -- Koeppen closing his eyes, ready for the blow he knows is to come.

But Priest only lifts the man's head, studying his neck.

He's clean.

And without a single word -- Priest just walks away.

When Koeppen opens his eyes, he's a new man -- a man absolved.

With renewed energy, he looks to the crowd around him. And for the first moment in a long time...He believes.

KOEPHEN (CONT'D)

(calling out)

People don't run! God is here for you!
He wants you to STOP! Stop and ask
yourself a question --

And the people DO stop, looking to him, the panic leaving their eyes...

KOEPHEN (CONT'D)

Ask yourselves -- Where am I going?

At this, Priest turns, the question catching him as well.
And it's only now he realizes --

He has no answer.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTPOST 10 - DAWN

The windmill.

Its rusty blades scrape along, the metal catching the first rays of the day.

AARON PACE is already up, working on rebuilding his house.

He stops, gazing off in the distance.

ON THE HORIZON

A cycle. Two black specs riding it. Hicks and Lucy.

Dropping his tools, he runs to meet it.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTPOST 10 - SEVERAL DAYS LATER - NIGHT

Time has passed. The moon shines through an open doorway.

Lucy lies in bed, Aaron spoon feeding her a warm broth. He smiles, Lucy reluctant to smile back, still uncomfortable with her teeth.

But eventually -- for her father...she manages it.

HICKS

Leans against the back wall watching. Lucy glances his way...then shyly looks away.

AARON

I can't thank you enough for what you've done, sheriff.

HICKS

Just make sure she keeps on the tea. It's a special brew -- lessens the bloodthirst...something my granddad taught me.

Aaron nods hopefully, squeezing his daughter's hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTPOST 10 - LATER

A full moon.

Hicks stands on the porch, enjoying the breeze as he pops a wad of chaw in his mouth.

A MOVEMENT out in the darkness catches his attention.

IN THE DISTANCE

A FIGURE

Stands astride a motorcycle, shadowed in the moonlight.

Hicks approaches, the wind kicking up, whistling through the emptiness. Even though he can't see him -- Hicks knows who it is.

HICKS
It doesn't have to be like this.

Priest just stands, staring.

Hick's hand curls around the revolver.

Priest looks to the cabin, the challenge hanging in the air then --

He steps from the bike, advancing towards Hicks.

Hicks pulls his gun, leveling it.

Priest keeps coming, the wind blowing harder as he approaches. A feeling of inevitability.

Hicks stands his ground, cocking his gun.

HICKS (CONT'D)
Don't make me do this.

PRIEST

Stares into his eyes and --

Something passes between them...something so strong and personal it transcends emotion.

Hicks FIRES!

But Priest is gone.

Hicks looks around --

There's no sign of him, not even the bike.

HICKS (CONT'D)
(realizing)
Shit.

He RACES back to the cabin...

INT. OUTPOST 10 - SAME

Hicks BURSTS through the doorway, finding --

LUCY AND AARON

Sitting peacefully on the bed together, just as he left them.
Aaron holds up the cup, turning it over.

AARON

All done.

(beat)

We heard you fire your gun. Is
everything OK?

A beat -- then Hicks nods.

HICKS

Nothing to worry about, just a coyote.

Aaron smiles, happy enough to be with Lucy.

AARON

Well...we're all God's creatures.

Hicks turns, ready to leave, but something on the table
catches his eye --

THE DESERT RAT'S HOMEMADE CROSS

He picks it up, turning it in his hand, the colored stones
catching the moonlight...How the hell did it get there?

AARON (CONT'D)

Don't forget your cross -- It's
beautiful.

A flicker of a smile crosses Hick's face, realizing.

HICKS

Actually --

(beat)

I think it's for you...and Lucy.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTELAND - NIGHT

Alone in the darkness, Priest sits on his cycle, his hand
clutching the WELL-WORN PHOTO OF THE PACE FAMILY.

His eyes shift, gazing into the distance at the outpost, a
warm glow emanating from within the cabin.

He places the photo in his pocket. The wind making a high,
lonely sound.

VRROOOOM!

Priest streaks into the night, bathed in moonlight,
desolation opening around him.

He disappears into the emptiness.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTELAND - NIGHT

The vampire train.

A car lies half-buried in the sand, mangled cage within.

A BLACK CLAW

Emerges from inside, clamping onto metal, something dragging
itself out into the moonlight.

It's a PUREBLOOD.

With a SCREECH it takes to the night sky, massive black wings
fluttering, arcing towards the twinkling metropolis.

FADE OUT